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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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BJP's Fadnavis crowned M'rashtra CM for 3rd time

Ajit to be DyCM, suspense over Shinde's role continues

MUMBAI, 4 DEC

Devendra Fadnavis will be sworn in as Maharashtra Chief Minister on Thursday, after Governor CP Radhakrishnan invited him to form the new government.

Two deputy chief ministers, including NCP leader Ajit Pawar, will also be sworn in at the ceremony at the sprawling Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on Thursday in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. No other minister is named yet.

There is no clarity yet on whether outgoing Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will be a part of the new ministry. While Fadnavis said he has requested Shinde to join the government, Shinde said the media will be updated on this front later on Wednesday.

A delegation of the ruling Mahayuti alliance met the Governor at Raj Bhavan on Wednesday, soon after Fadnavis was unanimously elected state BJP legislature party leader.

NCP Chief Ajit Pawar, BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis with Shiv Sena Chief Eknath Shinde at Governor's house in Mumbai on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Fadnavis said, "I met Eknath yesterday and told him that it is the wish of both the Shiv Sena and Mahayuti members that he should be with us in this government." Shinde had been camping in Thane citing health problems, sparking speculation of internal discord in the Mahayuti alliance. However, he returned to Mumbai on Tuesday. At the Raj Bhavan press conference on Wednesday, when a reporter asked Shinde if he and Ajit Pawar would be sworn in as deputy chief ministers at Azad Maidan, Shinde replied, "Let's wait till evening. The oath ceremony is tomorrow." Ajit butted in, quipping, "Inka to shaam tak pata chalega. Main to shapath le raha hoon." "I am happy that at this place around two and a half years ago, Fadnavis had recommended my name that I should become the chief minister. Now, we have given a letter of recommendation from Shiv Sena for Fadnavis to become chief minister," Shinde said. The invitation cards sent out by the state Chief Secretary Sujata Saunik for the ceremony include an interesting detail. They mention the new chief minister as "Devendra Sarita Gangadharrao Fadnavis." Sarita is his mother's name, and Gangadhar is his father's. A three-day special session of the Legislative Assembly will be held in Mumbai from 7 December to enable newly-elected MLAs to take oath and elect a speaker. *—PTI*

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There was reportedly stiff competition between Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar for the CM's post in 2023 **PHOTO: PTI**

No power-sharing pact with DKS: CM

MANDYA, 4 DEC

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said there was no pre-agreement between him and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar over power sharing, and he would abide by the decision of the party high command on that matter.

Reacting to Siddaramaiah's comments, Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress president, said whatever the CM said was final.

"There was no agreement. I will abide by the high command's decision," Siddaramaiah told media, in response to a question on Shivakumar's reported statement that there was an agreement between them before he became the chief minister.

There was stiff competition between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the CM's post after the declaration of Assembly election results in May 2023. The Congress managed to convince the latter and made him the deputy chief minister. There were some reports at the time that a compromise had been reached based on a "rotational chief minister formula", according to which Shivakumar would become the CM after two-and-half years, but this was not officially confirmed by the party. *—PTI*

People catch the man who opened fire at SAD leader Sukhbir Singh Badal at the Golden Temple, in Amritsar on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Ex-Khalistani terrorist open fires at Badal

AMRITSAR, 4 DEC

Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal escaped a bid on his life on Wednesday when a former Khalistani terrorist fired from a close range at Punjab's ex deputy chief minister at the Golden Temple's entrance here but missed as plainclothes policemen overpowered him.

The former deputy chief minister is protected by Z+ security.

The attack, which took place around 9.30am, was captured on cameras of media persons who had gathered to cover the second day of Badal performing "sewadar" duty outside the Sikh shrine as penance for "mistakes" committed by the SAD government in Punjab from 2007 to 2017.

Television footage showed the shooter slowly walking towards Badal, 62, who was sitting in a wheelchair because of a fractured leg, and pulling out a gun from his pocket. A police official in plainclothes standing near Badal quickly grabbed the attacker's hands and pushed him away.

In the melee, the gun was fired, but the bullet hit the shrine's entrance wall behind Badal. The SAD leader escaped unhurt. Soon, other security personnel and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) task force also intervened. Police identified the shooter as Narain Singh Chaura, a resident of Dera Baba Nanak and a former terrorist. He has been placed under arrest. *—PTI*

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UP MAN FACES DEATH IN SAUDI ON DRUG CHARGES

MEERUT, 4 DEC

A court in Saudi Arabia has sentenced a man Zaid Junaid from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh to death on charges of drug trafficking, triggering panic and despair among his family members who have pleaded for clemency.

His elder brother Suhail said, "My father has already requested the government to file a mercy plea with the Saudi. The application was submitted on Tuesday."

Aged around 35, Zaid moved to Saudi Arabia in 2018 to work as a driver for a company.

He worked at Al-Zafar Company. His troubles began when his vehicle was stolen, and was recovered by police three days later. Subsequently, the vehicle got damaged in an accident, leading his employer to file a lawsuit to recover the costs.

Unable to bear the financial burden, Zaid left the company and began working as the driver for a Saudi police officer.

However, three months into his new job, Zaid was implicated in a drug smuggling case after police claimed to have found 700g of narcotics from the vehicle he was driving, the family said.

He was arrested on 15 January, 2023, and has been imprisoned at the Jeddah Central Jail since then. *—PTI*

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were stopped at the Ghazipur border on their way to visit violence-hit Sambhal, in Ghaziabad on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Cops stop Gandhi siblings on the way to Sambhal

GHAZIABAD, 4 DEC

A Congress delegation under Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, on his way to Sambhal, was stopped by the Uttar Pradesh Police at the Ghazipur border on Wednesday.

The Opposition party leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, returned to Delhi after staying at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border for about two hours.

A massive traffic jam was witnessed at the Ghazipur border on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway in the morning, as Congress workers gathered there defying heavy barricading. With the carriageway from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh heavily congested, commuters faced a harrowing time in reaching their destinations.

After being stopped at the Ghazipur border, Rahul Gandhi said, "We are trying to go to Sambhal. Police are not allowing us. As the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, it is my right to go there. I said that I am ready to go alone, I am ready to go with the police, but they did not agree to that either."

"We want to go to Sambhal and see what happened there. We want to meet the people but I'm not being allowed my constitutional right. This is India where attempts are on to end the Constitution. But we will keep fighting," he added.

Priyanka Vadra said what happened in Sambhal was wrong and as the LoP, Rahul Gandhi has the constitutional right to visit the place. "He is different from other people. He cannot be stopped. He has the constitutional right to go and meet the victims, he should be allowed," she said.

Meanwhile, BJP flayed Rahul for trying to visit Sambhal without giving prior intimation to authorities and alleged that it was an act of desperation as his party is competing with SP for the votes of the minority communities. *—PTI*

Teacher arrested for raping Kalaburagi girl

KALABURAGI, 4 DEC

A private school teacher was arrested for allegedly raping a minor student in Yedrami, police said on Wednesday. The man has been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act for sexually assaulting the student of Class V. The town was tense on Tuesday after the incident came to light, with students, teachers and various organisations staging protests demanding strict action against the culprit. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

ISRO pushes Proba-3 launch due to 'anomaly'

SRIHARIKOTA, 4 DEC

The ISRO has rescheduled the launch of PSLV-C59 to Thursday due to an "anomaly" detected in the PROBA-3 spacecraft, the agency announced on Wednesday, minutes before the scheduled launch. The Bengaluru-headquartered space agency had originally planned the launch at 4.08pm on Wednesday from the spaceport here. Dubbed as world's first initiative of its kind, the Proba-3 (Project for Onboard Anatomy) | consists of two satellites -- Coronagraph (310kgs) and Occulter (240kgs) -- in which two spacecraft would fly together as one. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

EXISTING LAW AMENDED

Assam bans beef in hotels, eateries

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

The Assam government has decided to ban serving and consumption of beef in restaurants, hotels and public places, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Wednesday.

A decision was taken at a meeting of the state Cabinet to amend the existing law on beef consumption to incorporate the new provisions.

Sarma said the current law on beef consumption is strong but there has been no prohibition in consumption of beef at restaurants, hotels and religious or social gathering so far.

He said the cabinet also decided to broaden the road connecting Guwahati's Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi airport to the city from four lane to six lane.

Himanta Biswa Sarma **PHOTO: PTI**

- Briefing about his series of meetings he had in the Delhi, Sarma said during his interaction with PM Narendra Modi he had submitted proposals for approval of various projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore.

He said a cabinet expansion will take place on 7 December. Briefing about his series of meetings he had in the national capital, Sarma said during his interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi he had submitted proposals for approval of various projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore.

These projects include enhancement of capacity of Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemical Limited to five million tonne, expansion of the Namrup fertiliser plant at a cost of Rs 10,000 crore and Guwahati ring road projects.

Sarma said his government is also planning to built an expressway from Guwahati to Silchar through Meghalaya at a cost of Rs 25,000 crore which will reduce the travel time between the two cities to just five hours from the present 12 hours. *—PTI*

OFF-DUTY JAWAN SHOT AT BY TERRORISTS IN J&K

SRINAGAR, 4 DEC

An off-duty Army jawan was injured after being shot by terrorists in the Tral area of Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on Wednesday, officials said.

Delhair Mushtaq, a resident of Aripal area in Tral, sustained two bullet injuries on the legs. The incident occurred near his house at Sofigund, they said.

Mushtaq was rushed to a hospital where his condition is stated to be stable, they said.

The soldier was on leave and had come home to spend time with his family.

Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to track down the assailants, the officials said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

5.3 quake jolts T'gana, tremors felt in Andhra

HYDERABAD, 4 DEC

Parts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh were jolted by tremors on Wednesday due to an earthquake of 5.6 magnitude at Mulugu, the first such strong quake to strike the southern state in decades.

Mulugu in Telangana is located about 200km from state capital Hyderabad.

The quake hit at 7.27am. The tremors were felt at several places in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Mulugu district Collector Divakara TS said no loss of life or major damage to property has been reported.

The official said he felt the tremors for a short period in the morning and came out of the house.

People run out of houses after a quake strikes Telangana's Mulugu **PHOTO: PTI**

Several residents of Warangal, near Mulugu, said they experienced an unusual jerk for a few seconds. Ceiling fans began swinging and items started falling off the cupboards. *—PTI*

Mandya literary meet registration extended till 7 Dec

MYSURU, 4 DEC

Mandya district administration has extended the online registration deadline from 5 December to 7 December to facilitate more participation in the three-day 87th All India Kannada Sahitya Sammelana, which will be held in Mandya from 20 December. As of 4 December, 4,077 had registered through the official website https://kannadasahithyaparishattu.in/sammelana2024/. They plan to facilitate registration up to 6,000. This registration is necessary to make the required seating arrangements, to avail rooms, and choultries, and to distribute conference bag kits and sanitation kits for the three-day event. The district administration will provide information about the accommodation of Kalyana Mantaps, guest houses, and other details in advance through this website for those who have registered, according to a release from Assistant Commissioner Shivamurth. —*Salar News*

Mysuru all set for Subramanya Shasti celebrations

MYSURU, 4 DEC

The Mysuru taluk administration has made elaborate arrangements to prevent overcrowding and manage traffic to facilitate easy darshan for all devotees at the Subramanyeswara temple on account of Subramanya Shasti, near Siddalingapura on the Mysuru-Bengaluru Road, from 3pm on 6 December until 11pm on 7 December. Organisations distributing prasadam must register their names at the Mysuru taluk administration office before beginning distribution. In addition to the police, the taluk administration has also deputed revenue department officials to assist in facilitating easy darshan, according to the release—*Salar News*

MLA Sait urges youth to showcase talents at dist fest

MYSURU, 4 DEC

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) working president and MLA Tanveer Sait on Wednesday advised youths, college students to make use of district level youth festivals for exhibition of their hidden talents. Speaking after inaugurating the two day district level youths festival jointly organised by district administration, zilla Panchayat, department of Youth Affairs and sports, Nehru Yuva Kendra, National Service Scheme, University of Mysuru, Maharanis College of Science, Karnataka Science and Technology Council, Youth Hostel and other organizations held at Chamundi Vihar Stadium. He said that the event features various cultural programmes, motivational talks, and sports competitions. The selected participants youths to be recommended to take part in state and national level youth festivals, he said. He also urged the officials to highlight the importance of multiculturalism in youth festivals. —*Salar News*

Official assures to address nomads' grievances

MYSURU, 4 DEC

Karnataka Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities Development Corporation Chairperson G. Pallavi on Wednesday inspected the facilities provided to nomads living in Yellamma colony in Bannimantap and Ekalavyanagar near Vikrant colony in the City. She also assured that she would look into their complaints to redress their grievances. During her visit to Ellamma colony, the residents brought to her notice the denial of basic facilities like underground drainage, and toilets, and the delay in the distribution of title deeds to their properties. They also highlighted sanitation issues due to the lack of clean-lines. —*Salar News*

ED's letter to Lokayukata politically motivated: CM

CM fumes at probe agency for releasing the letter to media

CM Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: PTI**

MANDYA, 4 DEC

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday termed as "politically motivated" the recent communication of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to the state Lokayukta police in connection with the the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case.

He is facing allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife Parvathi BM by MUDA. "It is politically motivated. Tomorrow our writ appeal against the single bench order is coming up (before division bench in HC). If they have done it just ahead of it, what does it mean? First of all they (ED) don't have any powers to investigate, they cannot do it legally. Secondly, they have done this to influence the court," he said.

A senior Lokayukta officer said such "confidential matters" should never be shared with media when the case was under investigation.

The officer expressed his apprehension that the ED first shared the information with the media before doing it with the Lokayukta. According to him, the ED investigates case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and does not investigate the case under the CrPC and apply the evidentiary standards as charted out in the Indian Evidences Act.

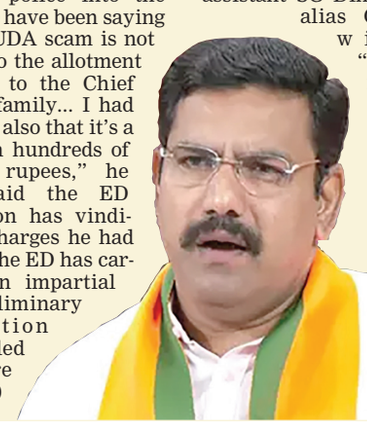
According to ED, evidence of several irregularities has been detected in the transfer of 14 sites by the MUDA to Parvathi. ED in the recent communication sent to the Lokayukta, claimed that its probe has also found that MUDA had also "illegally" allotted a total of 1,095 sites in benami and other such transactions. He said, "The Governor had asked to investigate, the district court (special court) told Lokayukta police to investigate and submit a report by 24 December. They (Lokayukta police) are investigating, but why are they (the ED) writing a letter? What is their intention? Isn't it deliberate?" Chamaraja MLA K Harishgowda said that the State government scrapped allotment of 48 sites by a cooperative society to curb irregularities.

—*Salar News with Agencies*

BJP HAILS ED PROBE INTO MUDA CASE

KALABURAGI, 4 DEC

Karnataka BJP president BY Vijayendra on Wednesday said the Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe into the MUDA case has vindicated his party's stand that this scam was not limited to the allotment of 14 sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's family. Vijayendra said that the investigation by the ED, in the preliminary stage, has uncovered irregularities to the tune of over Rs 700 crore. He also raised doubts about the inquiry conducted by the Lokayukta police into the matter."We have been saying that the MUDA scam is not restricted to the allotment of 14 sites to the Chief Minister's family... I had said earlier also that it's a scam worth hundreds of crores of rupees," he said.He said the ED investigation has vindicated the charges he had levelled. "The ED has carried out an impartial probe. Preliminary investigation has revealed that more than Rs 700 crore worth scam has taken place in MUDA site allotment." Vijayendra said the ED has also found irregularities in the allotment of 14 sites to CM's wife Parvathi BM.The central agency, in a recent communication to the Karnataka Lokayukta department, also claimed that its probe has also found that MUDA had "illegally" allotted a total of 1,095 sites in benami and other such transactions.The agency has also claimed to have found evidence that one of Siddaramaiah's personal assistant SG Dinesh Kumar alias CT Kumar wielded "undue influence" in the process —*PTI*



BJP VS YATNAL

BSY backs Yatnal, calls for resolving issues through talks

SHIVAMOGGA, 4 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

Sounding a conciliatory note, veteran BJP leader BS Yediyurappa on Wednesday said Bijapur MLA and his critic Basanagouda Patil Yatnal was "not an outsider", and expressed hope about settling all the internal issues through discussions.

Yatnal has been openly criticising the party's state leadership as well.

Yediyurappa also asserted he and his son B Y Vijayendra, who is the state BJP chief, want to take everyone along together in strengthening the party.

"Let's talk, Yatnal is not an outsider, he might be outraged due to some reasons. My expectation is that everyone should be taken along together, this is also the expectation of Vijayendra...." the former Chief Minister said in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "if there are any shortcomings, we should sit opposite to each other and discuss, settle them and take everyone along together. This is my opinion. I hope that everyone will cooperate in this."

To a question on Yatnal publicly making comments against him and his family, which was also damaging the party, Yediyurappa said, "Let him speak, but we will together make honest efforts to rectify things."

Yatnal has been openly critical of Vijayendra, accusing him of indulging in "adjustment politics" with the ruling Congress.

Meanwhile, Yatnal had said he has submitted a six-page reply to the notice served to him, and has explained to the party leadership in detail, the alleged "adjustment politics, grand corruption and dynastic politics" prevailing in BJP's unit.

The former chief minister said BJP legislators will together actively participate during the winter session in Belagavi starting next week and will try to create awareness about the failures of the Congress government and bring out its shortcomings to the notice of the people. —*PTI*

Deve Gowda appeals to Centre to address Bengaluru water woes

BENGALURU 4 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

- Making a special mention in the Rajya Sabha, HD Deve Gowda, JD(S) leader noted that due to the water shortage, people were forced to buy water from private operators in Bengaluru

Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda on Wednesday appealed to the Union government to look into the drinking water shortage in Bengaluru. Making a special mention in the Rajya Sabha, the JD(S) leader noted that due to the water shortage, people were forced to buy water from private operators in Bengaluru.

"With folded hands, I would like to appeal to the Union government to solve this problem," the former prime minister said.

He noted that private operators were charging exorbitantly for the water supply in the city.

Raghav Chadha of AAP asked the government to bestow Bharat Ratna award for freedom fighter Bhagat Singh.

"I request the government that it announces Bharat Ratna for Bhagat Singh. If it happens the coming generations of this country would hail this House (Rajya Sabha)," he added.

BJD member Sasmit Patra sought special category status for Orissa.

He noted that the state has suffered due to various natural disasters which have led to massive economic loss for the state. —*PTI*

IN SOLIDARITY

Members of the Hindu Hitarakshana Vedike staged a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday, condemning atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

'LIFE SKILLS FOR GIRLS'

Minister of Primary & Secondary Education Madhu Bangarappa with students during the release of the book 'Life Skills for Girls' in Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Cong prodding Waqf Board to grab farmers' lands: Vijayendra

KALABURAGI, 4 DEC

Karnataka BJP President BY Vijayendra on Wednesday said the Congress government was instigating the Waqf Board to send notices to farmers in the state.

"The Waqf issue has become very serious in Karnataka. Thousands of farmers have been getting notice of the Waqf Board. This is instigated by the Congress government. The BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have taken the Waqf issue seriously. While the Amendment Bill is in progress, the state government, headed by the CM Siddaramiah, is in a hurry to grab farmers' land for the Waqf Board," Vijayendra said.

On 22 November, the BJP unit had staged a protest against the state government over Waqf Board's notices related to farmers' lands, accusing the Congress government of appeasement politics and encouraging the takeover of farmers' properties.

Besides, reacting to the latest decision of a 20 per cent fee hike in government hospitals and medical colleges, Vijayendra said every decision taken by the Karnataka government was anti-poor.

The State BJP Chief further said, "Every decision taken by the Karnataka government is anti-poor. The latest is a 20 per cent (fee) hike in government hospitals and medical colleges. It indicates that the Congress government is desperate to raise resources to fulfil its guarantees. I demand that Siddaramaiah withdrew such anti-poor decisions."

About the cancellation of the BPL cards, he said a scientific approach should be taken. "Just because someone has a PAN card, that person need not be rich," he said. —*PTI*

BJP protests against the Congress-led state government over notices issued to farmers by the Waqf Board in Hubballi on Wednesday **PHOTO: X/ @BJP4KARNATAKA**

PHOTO: X

State working on circular economy policy: Minister

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Karnataka is working on India's first-ever circular economic policy, which will mandate that 20 percent of all construction materials be sustainable, State Minister **Priyank Kharge** said on Wednesday.

Circular economy aims to circumvent waste through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbish, re-manufacture, recycle and composting. This is being increasingly adopted by governments around the world to tackle specifically climate change related challenges.

As part of this policy, 20 per cent of all construction materials will be required to be sustainable, he added. Kharge was speaking at Propagate 2024, the annual flagship event of Brigade REAP, a real estate accelerator program, in Bengaluru.

The summit, which focused on proptech, featured industry experts discussing the latest tech trends, innovations, and the key factors required to scale the next unicorn in proptech and urban tech.

According to Kharge, thanks to various timely policies implemented by the Karnataka government, Bengaluru has transformed from being a pensioners' paradise to the most disruptive city in the world. He also emphasised that the government and the real estate sector must collaborate to create a sustainable India.

"He also mentioned that while slogans are being made elsewhere, the real work is being done in Karnataka. This, Kharge said, is why when the world looks at India, it is specifically focusing on Karnataka. —*PTI*

1ST DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Mysuru Dasara jumbo Arjuna remembered

MYSURU, 4 DEC

Speaking after taking part in a remembrance function of Dasara howdah elephant Arjuna, who died during an operation in Yeslur forest in Hassan district last year, organised by Mysuru Cultural Association held in the city, T Balachandra, a retired forest officer, recently highlighted the crucial roles played by mahouts, kavadis (elephant drivers), and veterinarians in handling wild tuskers, particularly in capturing rogue elephants. These trained professionals, working with specially trained elephants known as kumkis, assist the forest department in managing dangerous wild elephants.

Dasara jumbo Arjuna was rogue in his initial years of taming, but later became mild **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

Their collaborative efforts not only help capture elephants posing threats to human settlements but also ensure their safe relocation and rehabilitation.

Nagaraj recalled the contributions of Arjuna in protecting the lives of various department personnel caught in trouble during forest combing operations. Arjuna who was rogue , later became mild because of the training initiated by Doddamasthi like Mahuts in the forest department. A book on Arjuna by journalist Haitichanda Ramesh Uttappa was also a highlight of the event. Uttappa appealed to the State government to stop using sedatives to tame jumbos, and urged to construct a memorial after Arjuna. —*Salar News*

- Uttappa appealed to the State government to stop using sedatives to tame jumbos, instead use scientific measures and urged to construct a memorial after Arjuna

De-escalation talks with China soon: EAM

Oppn walks out of RS against anti-farmer policies; Cong alleges cover-up in Adani issue

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Peace and tranquility in border areas is a pre-requisite for the development of bilateral ties with China and the two side will be discussing de-escalation and effective management of activities in these areas in the coming days, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday while making a statement on India-China relations in the Rajya Sabha.

A brief uproar was also witnessed following the statement and Opposition MPs walked out of the House after Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, disallowed them from seeking some clarifications.

Jaishankar, in his statement, said India was and remains very clear that the three key principles must be observed in all circumstances, he said explaining: "one: both sides should strictly respect and observe the Line of Actual Control (LAC), two: neither side should attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo, and three: agreements and understandings reached in the past must be fully abided by in their entirety".

Congress and other Opposition party MPs walked out of the Rajya Sabha in protest against the government's alleged anti-farmer policies and for not fulfilling the promise of increasing the minimum support price (MSP) for various crops.

Congress MPs raised slogans after Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar disallowed motions seeking setting aside of the business of the day to discuss the farmers issue.

A BJP Lok Sabha member sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the release of ISKCON monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, who has been jailed in Bangladesh on charges of sedition.

Ujjain MP Anil Firojiya raised the issue during Zero Hour in Lok Sabha.

Meanwhile, Congress said a "cover-up" is in the making after reports claimed entities connected to the Adani Group have approached the SEBI seeking settlement in a case. —*PTI*

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Union Minister S Jaishankar during the Winter session of Parliament **PHOTO: PTI**

DMK's Kanimozhi flags risks of quick commerce medicine

DMK leader Kanimozhi NVN Somu on Wednesday expressed concern over quick commerce companies delivering medicines saying they might be violating drug regulations, and asked the government to stop such deliveries immediately. Raising the matter during the Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, she said the ultra-fast delivery model may increase the possibility of expired/counterfeit medicines reaching people. DMK MP also said the 10-minute delivery of medicines model violates Indian drug regulations and poses health and safety risks to the public. She said the distribution and supply of medicines in India involve strict protocols to prevent harm to consumers. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Bhutan King to pay 2-day visit to India

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck will pay a two-day visit to India beginning Thursday with an aim to further expand the already close ties between the two countries. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the King will be accompanied by Queen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck and senior officials of the Bhutan government. "During the visit, His Majesty, the King of Bhutan, will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar," the MEA said. India and Bhutan enjoy unique ties of friendship and cooperation which are characterized by mutual understanding and trust, it said. —*PTI*

Grenade attack on Army post in J&K; no casualties

JAMMU, 4 DEC

Terrorists hurled two grenades at an Army post in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir early Wednesday, officials said. Only one of the grenades exploded. There were no casualties in the attack. Security forces have launched a search operation to trace the terrorists, the officials said. Terrorists lobbed two grenades at an Army post behind an Army camp in the Surankote area. While one of them exploded, the other did not and was subsequently defused by experts during the search operation, they said. The safety pin of the exploded grenade was found near the perimeter wall of the Army camp, they added. —*PTI*

FM blames MVA govt for delaying bullet train projects

MUMBAI, 4 DEC

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday accused the past "Congress-led government" of stalling key infrastructure projects in Maharashtra including the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train and Mumbai Metro car shed in Aarey Colony. The previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government of the Congress, undivided Nationalist Congress Party and undivided Shiv Sena also created hurdles when the Union government tried to resolve the issues plaguing Mumbai's suburban railway network, she claimed. "Had the Congress-led government not been in power in Maharashtra during the MVA period, the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train would have already commenced," she said. —*PTI*

Manipur: Women's panel probes Jiribam killings

IMPHAL, 4 DEC

The Manipur State Commission for Women (MSCW) has set up a three-member fact-finding team to investigate the killing of three women and three children by suspected militants in Jiribam district, an official said on Wednesday. The team will include its chairperson and two other members, he said. The bodies of the three women and three children were recovered in Jiri and Barak rivers in Manipur and Assam, respectively, last month. They had earlier gone missing from a relief camp in Jiribam district. "On 29 November, a meeting chaired by DC Jiribam was held with the MSCW team, and officials of various departments directly involved in dealing with daily affairs of the relief camps were also present," the commission said in a statement. Discussions were also held about administrative issues and ways to improve the living condition of inmates in relief camps, the statement said. The members of the panel also met with family members of the victims. —*PTI*

RS clears bill to replace 100-year-old Boiler Act

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Rajya Sabha on Wednesday cleared a bill to provide for the regulation of boilers, safety of life and property of persons from the danger of explosions of steam-boilers and uniformity in registration.

The Boilers Bill, 2024 seeks to repeal the century old Boilers Act, 1923.

The bill, which aims to decriminalise seven offences and promote ease of doing business, was cleared in the Upper House by a voice vote.

The bill also provisions to ensure the safety of persons working inside a boiler, it said, adding, it also talked about repair of boilers to be undertaken by qualified and competent persons.

According to an earlier statement by the commerce ministry, the bill will benefit boiler users including those in the MSME sector as provisions related to decriminalisation have been incorporated in the Bill, and promote ease of doing business..

Out of the seven offences, to ensure the safety of boilers and personnel, in four major offences which may result in loss of life and property, criminal penalties are retained.

For other offences, a provision is being made for a financial penalty. For all non-criminal offences, 'fine' has been converted into 'penalty' to be levied through executive mechanism instead of courts as existed earlier. —*PTI*

The Boilers Bill, 2024 seeks to repeal the century old Boilers Act, 1923 **PHOTO: PTI**

Om Birla **PHOTO: PTI**

No protests at Parl entry, Speaker warns MPs

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Against the backdrop of Opposition members holding protests at the entry gate of Parliament House, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday urged MPs not to create hindrances as it obstructs those entering the building, especially women members.

His appeal came a day after the Lok Sabha secretariat urged MPs not to hold protests in front of the gates of Parliament House, contending that such obstruction of movement could affect their safety and security.

"I request all political parties not to obstruct the entry gate when others are entering the building (to attend proceedings).

"Women MPs have personally flagged their difficulty. I have already given directions and I request once again that if there is an issue, meet me but there should be no obstruction at the entry gate," Birla said ahead of Zero Hour. —*PTI*

MAHAYUTI'S SHOWTIME

BJP's central observers Nirmala Sitharaman and Vijay Rupani felicitates leader Devendra Fadnavis in Mumbai on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Teacher recalls Fadnavis as polite

NAGPUR, 4 DEC

He used to sit on the back row benches in the school as he was one of the taller students, says Savitri Subramanium, who was Fadnavis' teacher in Saraswati Vidyalaya here from Class 8 to 10.

Recalling his nature, Subramanium said, "Fadnavis was average and unextraordinary in studies, but studied well. He was a very polite, cheerful and sensitive student."

His entire class batch was very understanding. Fadnavis was very sensitive and used help other students in need, she added.

She said she never thought that Fadnavis would become a good orator as he never came on stage or performed on stage during the school days.

`Fadnavis used social media strategically and effectively'

Fadnavis, set to return as Maharashtra Chief Minister for the third time, used social media effectively which helped him reach out to large sections of digital audience compared to his peers, a political observer noted on Wednesday.

Fadnavis has 59 lakh followers on X (earlier Twitter), 91 lakh on Facebook, 20 lakh on Instagram, 11 lakh subscribers on YouTube, and 55,000 followers on his WhatsApp channel, he said. —*PTI*

No surge in last hour of polling: EC

MUMBAI, 4 DEC

Maharashtra's Chief Electoral Officer S Chockalingam has said the seven per cent increase in voter turnout in the last hour of polling for the state assembly elections was not a surge, as claimed by the opposition, but an "average" process.

In a video statement on Monday, Chockaligam said Maharashtra is a large state with more than one lakh polling booths.

"If 76 lakh voters turn up in the last hour of polling, it is only (an average of) 76 voters in each of the polling centres," he added.

''Unlike Jharkhand, Maharashtra votes more in the later half of the day. Whereas in Jharkhand, most of the voting takes place in the first half," Chockalingam said.

Chockaligam also refuted concerns raised by the opposition parties over the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), saying they are technically reliable and transparent.

Over 4,000 cops on duty for oath ceremony

More than 4,000 police personnel have been deployed for security during the swearing-in ceremony of Maharashtra's new chief minister scheduled on Thursday evening, officials said. The oath ceremony will be held at the Azad Maidan in south Mumbai in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Security arrangements have also been made considering the traffic congestion on roads leading to the Azad Maidan. —*PTI*

S Chockalingam **PHOTO: ANI**

- Chockaligam also refuted concerns raised by the opposition parties over the EVMs, saying they are technically reliable and transparent and said Maharashtra is a large state with more than one lakh polling booths

Narain Singh Chaura, a former terrorist being taken into custody after he shot SAD leader Sukhbir Singh Badal, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Alert Punjab ASI foils murder bid on Sukhbir

CHANDIGARH, 4 DEC

Prompt action by an alert Punjab Police ASI on Wednesday helped thwart a murderous bid on Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Jasbir Singh, who was standing close to Sukhbir Badal at the entrance of the Golden Temple in plain-clothes, swung into action the moment he sensed a threat to the senior Akali leader.

Television footage showed Narain Singh Chaura, a former terrorist, slowly moving towards Sukhbir Badal, who was sitting on a wheelchair due to a fractured leg, and suddenly pulling out a gun from his pocket.

But before Chaura could pull the trigger, an alert Singh pounced on him, grabbed his hands, pushed them upwards and whisked him away. In the melee, the gun fired but fortunately the bullet hit the entrance wall of the shrine behind Sukhbir Badal, who escaped unhurt.

Oppn asks Mann to quit over attack

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday directed police to thoroughly investigate the attempt on the life of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Sukhbir Singh Badal at the Golden Temple, even as Opposition parties demanded his resignation over the "breakdown" of law and order.

Mann lauded police for their promptness in foiling the attack and arresting the culprit. "Punjab Police prevented a major incident today. Because of their promptness, a conspiracy to defame Punjab and Punjabis has failed. I strongly condemn the attack on Sukhbir Badal ji. I have issued strict instructions to police to investigate and submit a report." —*PTI*

AP port deal: YSRCP MP, others face coercion charges

AMARAVATI, 4 DEC

Andhra police have registered a case against YSRCP Rajya Sabha MP V Vijaysai Reddy and Y Vikranth Reddy, son of another party member YV Subba Reddy, for allegedly acquiring stakes in Kakinada Seaports Ltd (KSPL) and Kakinada SEZ (KSEZ) Ltd through "cheating, criminal intimidation, conspiracy" for a throwaway price in favour of Aurobindo Realty (since renamed as Auro Infra).

Former Minister and senior YSRCP leader Kakani Govardhan Reddy refuted the allegations and claimed "political vendetta," behind the action against his party colleagues.

According to a complaint filed on Monday by Karnati Venkateswara Rao, Chairman and Managing Director of KSPL, his family-owned firms' stakes of 41.12 per cent in KSPL and 48.74 per cent in KSEZ estimated to be worth over Rs 3600 crore was acquired in 2020-21 for little over Rs 500 crore.

- According to a complaint filed, his family-owned firms' stakes of 41.12 per cent in KSPL and 48.74 per cent in KSEZ to be worth over Rs 3600 crore was acquired in 2020-21 for little over Rs 500 crore

Besides Vijaysai and Vikranth, the FIR, registered by the Andhra Pradesh CID, also names Sarath Chandra Reddy (Non-executive director of Aurobindo Pharma Ltd) PKF Sridhar & Santhanam LLP and Aurobindo Realty and Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd, its Directors and others under sections related to "cheating, criminal intimidation, conspiracy".

Meanwhile, Aurobindo Pharma in a filing with BSE on Wednesday said the firm was in no way connected with the ownership or operations of Kakinada Seaports and Kakinada SEZ including Auro Infra Private Limited. —*PTI*

AMONG 157 NATIONS

India votes for UN resolution, wants Israel to leave Palestine

UNITED NATIONS, 4 DEC

India voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution that called for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and reiterated the call for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in West Asia.

The draft resolution 'Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine' tabled by Senegal was overwhelmingly adopted in the 193-member General Assembly on Tuesday.

India was among the 157 nations that voted in favour, while eight Member States - Argentina, Hungary, Israel, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea and the United States voted against it.

Cameroon, Czechia, Ecuador, Georgia, Paraguay, Ukraine and Uruguay abstained. Through the resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed its unwavering support, in accordance with international law, for the two-state solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognised borders, based on the pre-1967 borders. India also voted in favour of a resolution in the General Assembly that demanded that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of June 1967 in the implementation of Security Council resolutions. —*PTI*

India also voted in favour of a resolution that demanded Israel to withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan **PHOTO: X**

US sanctions 2 Indian firms for Iran oil shipments

WASHINGTON, 4 DEC

The United States on Tuesday imposed sanctions on 35 entities and vessels, including two from India, for transporting Iranian oil to other countries.

The two India-based entities are Vision Ship Management LLP that manages and operates the PHONIX, and Tightship Shipping Management (OPC) Private Limited.

Entities and vessels from the United Arab Emirates, China, Liberia, China, Hong Kong among others have also been slapped with sanctions.

India-based Vision Ship Management LLP manages and operates the PHONIX, which has carried millions of barrels of Iranian crude oil for CCPC since 2022. Tightship Shipping Management Private Limited manages or operates the OLIVE, BLACK PANTHER, and LIONESS, which have collectively carried tens of millions of dollars' worth of Iranian oil for NIOC since at least 2022. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Delhi temperature drops to 12 degree Celsius

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

New Delhi witnessed a temperature dip as the minimum temperature recorded on Wednesday at 8.30am was 12.0 degree Celsius. The temperature fell by almost 1.5 degrees in the last 24 hours due to cold north-westerly winds that drive down temperatures and signal the start of winter. Smog and mist conditions with predominant surface winds from the north-west directions with the wind speed of 8 to 12 km per hour in the national capital, according to IMD. On 29 and 30 November, the minimum temperature in Delhi was recorded as 11 degree Celsius. —*ANI*

5 B'deshi women held for illegal stay in Thane

THANE, 4 DEC

Police have arrested five Bangladeshi women for staying illegally in Maharashtra's Thane district, officials said on Wednesday. Acting on a tip, personnel of the Mira Bhayander-Vasai Virar crime branch's anti-human trafficking cell raided two residential premises in Mira Road and Naya Nagar areas on Tuesday. They took the help of interpreters to communicate with the women who were found to be occupying a couple of rooms there, senior police inspector Samir Ahirrao said. The police apprehended two Bangladeshi women from Mira Road and three others from Naya Nagar where they had come for work, he said. Two FIRs were registered against them at the Mira Road and Naya Nagar police stations under the provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act and the Indian Passport Act, he added. —*PTI*

Biker dragged on Audi bonnet in Pune, 3 held

PUNE, 4 DEC

The driver of an Audi allegedly dragged a motorcycle rider on the car's bonnet for more than three km after an argument in Maharashtra's Pune district, police said. Hours after the incident on Sunday evening in Pimpri-Chinchwad township, police arrested the car driver, Kamlesh Patil, 23, and his two associates -- Hemant Mhalaskar, 26, and Prathamesh Darade, 22, -- who were with him in the high-end vehicle, they said. The victim, Zacheria Mathew, was riding a motorcycle when his two-wheeler was hit by the recklessly driven Audi car in Bijlinagar area, police said on Tuesday. "After getting down from his motorbike, Mathew approached the car occupants and sought an explanation. However, the three accused started abusing him and his friend, and also assaulted them," an official from Nigdi police station said. —*PTI*

104 year old man released from WB jail after 36 years

KOLKATA/MALDA, 4 DEC

A 104-year-old man was released from West Bengal's Malda Correctional Home after languishing in jail for 36 years. The man said he would spend the rest of this life with his family members and do gardening. Rasikt Mondal was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1992 after being arrested in 1988 on the charge of murdering his brother in a land dispute. He was released on bail for about one year and given parole another time. Unfortunatelt, he High Court had turned down his pleas for release on several occasions. Mondal, a resident of Manikchak in Malda district, told reporters outside Malda Correctional Home on Tuesday, "I don't remember how many years I had spent in jail. It seemed never-ending. I don't even recall when I was brought here." —*PTI*

UP Gangsters Act appears to be draconian, observes SC

Counsel says he was illegally booked on allegations of mining

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday observed that the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act appeared to be "draconian".

The observation by a bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan came while it was hearing a plea filed by a man who has challenged a May 2023 Allahabad High Court order dismissing his application seeking to set aside proceedings against him pending before a district court in Kasganj in a case registered under the Act.

"This Act appears to be draconian," the apex court observed.

"We will consider it," the bench said while admitting the appeal.

While hearing the matter in November last year, the SC had sought responses from the Uttar Pradesh government and others on the plea and said, "By way of ad-interim order, no coercive steps be taken against the petitioner qua Gangster Act."

On Wednesday the petitioner's counsel said he has been booked in the case under the provisions of the 1986 Act on allegations of illegal mining in the Ganga River.

The counsel argued that earlier, another FIR related to alleged illegal mining was registered. The counsel appearing for the state referred to the provisions of the 1986 Act.

"It requires consideration," the bench said, adding that a separate plea challenging the constitutional validity of certain provisions of the Act was also pending adjudication before it.

Before the High Court, the counsel appearing for the petitioner argued that he was falsely implicated in the case lodged under the Gangsters Act. His counsel had claimed before the High Court that the case has been lodged under the Gangsters Act only on the basis of another case in which the petitioner has not been named. —*PTI*

In November 2023, the SC had sought responses from the Uttar Pradesh government and others on the plea PHOTO: PTI

Wish men menstruate, says SC on MP HC sacking woman judge

Wish men have menstruation, the Supreme Court has remarked, censuring the Madhya Pradesh High Court's decision to sack a woman judge based on performance and not considering her predicament due to a miscarriage. A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and N Kotiswar Singh sought a clarification on the criteria for the termination. On 11 November, 2023, the top court took a suo motu cognisance of the termination of six women judges by the state over unsatisfactory performance. —*PTI*

Tribunal can't outsource opinion: SC rejects NGT order

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

A tribunal has to arrive at its decision by considering all facts and circumstances, and cannot outsource an opinion and base its order on it, the Supreme Court has said and rejected an NGT order.

While hearing the appeals challenging a April 2021 order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), a bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan said the tribunal committed a "glaring error" as it based its decision only on the basis of the report of a joint committee.

The apex court therefore set aside the NGT's order, which had held a firm guilty of violating the Environment Protection Act norms and imposed a penalty on it.

The top court observed the NGT initially directed the firm's plant to be examined by the state pollution control board, which gave its findings and then the tribunal appointed a joint committee, on whose recommendations it acted and passed the order.

The tribunal, it noted, could not have proceeded further with the matter even at the initial stage without impleading the firm as a party respondent. —*PTI*

13 LOCATIONS RAIDED

ED nets 2 CAs, crypto trader in ₹640 cr cyber fraud

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Two chartered accountants (CAs) and a cryptocurrency trader have been arrested in the New Delhi in a money laundering investigation linked to a cyber fraud case of Rs 640 crore, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Wednesday.

The ED had conducted searches at 13 premises in Delhi, Gurugram, Jodhpur, Jhunjhunu, Hyderabad, Pune and Kolkata between 28 and 30 November and seized Rs 47 lakh "unexplained" cash and Rs 1.3 crore worth of cryptocurrencies.

The two CAs – Ajay Yadav and Vipin Yadav – and cryptocurrency trader Jitendra Kaswan were arrested during the searches, the ED said.

A fourth person, the brother of another "absconding" CA whose farmhouse ED raided on 28 November, has been arrested by the police in south-west Delhi on that day.

"A large-scale money-laundering racket operated with the assistance of handlers sitting abroad through a closely held chat group on instant messaging apps. Instructions regarding opening of mule accounts, cash circulation and purchase of crypto are provided on this group account by the handlers," the probe found.

The money laundering probe stems from two FIRs filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police that were registered to probe charges of cyber fraud to the tune of Rs 640 crore generated through betting, gambling, part-time jobs and phishing scams, the agency said in a statement.

The money was "siphoned off" by layering funds cheated from them through more than 5,000 "mule" Indian bank accounts and subsequently uploaded on PYYPL, a UAE-based payment platform, the ED said. Part of the money was withdrawn in cash in Dubai using debit and credit cards of Indian banks, it said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

- The money was "siphoned off" by layering funds cheated from them through more than 5,000 "mule" Indian bank accounts and subsequently uploaded on PYYPL, a UAE-based payment platform, the ED said

REMAND OF 8 SOUGHT

Anmol key conspirator in Baba murder: Cops

MUMBAI, 4 DEC

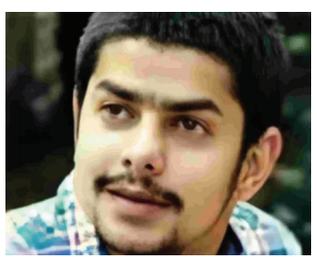
The name of Anmol Bishnoi, the younger brother of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, has emerged as the main conspirator in the killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique, the Mumbai police told a special court here.

The police made the claim on Tuesday while seeking the remand of eight accused in the case, citing provisions of the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

Special MCOCA court judge A M Patil remanded the eight accused, including the alleged main shooter Shivkumar Gautam, in police custody till 7 December.

Former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, 66, was shot dead on 12 October by three assailants outside his son Zeeshan Siddique's office building in Bandra East here. He suffered two bullet injuries on his chest and was rushed to the Lilavati hospital in Mumbai, where he passed away. Anmol, who was recently detained in the US and lodged in a prison there, has been shown as a wanted accused in the case.During the remand hearing, the Mumbai police told the court that Anmol Bishnoi's name has surfaced as the main conspirator in the case during their probe.

The crime branch has so far arrested 26 people, including alleged main shooter Shivkumar Gautam, in connection with the case. —*PTI*



Anmol Bishnoi PHOTO: PTI

Adani Defence delivers 2nd Drishti-10 drone to Navy

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Adani Defence and Aerospace has delivered a second Drishti-10 Starliner surveillance drone to the Indian Navy, boosting India's maritime forces' capabilities to monitor shipping lines and mitigate piracy risks.

Following the handover of the first Drishti-10 to the Indian Navy earlier this year, the induction of the second unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), a version of the Israel's Hermes 900 medium-altitude long-endurance UAV, into naval maritime operations was initiated at Porbandar in Gujarat, sources aware of the matter said.

Drishti 10 Starliner drone, manufactured by Adani Defence and Aerospace, a part of the conglomerate helmed by billionaire Gautam Adani, at its Hyderabad facility, is an advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platform with 36 hours endurance and 450 kg payload capacity.

The first Drishti-10 Starliner was delivered to the Indian Navy in January ear and the second to Army in June PHOTO: X

The only all-weather military platform, with NATO's STANAG 4671 (standardized agreement 4671) certifications for the UAV system's airworthiness, is cleared to fly in both segregated and unsegregated airspace.

The Drishti 10 is a force multiplier providing the Indian Navy with the ability to monitor vast maritime territories and unparalleled situational awareness.

This marks the first-ever integration of such an advanced payload suites onto a MALE platform, enabling the Indian Navy with differentiated capabilities to dominate maritime surveillance, they said. Adani Defence had previously delivered the Drishti-10 Starliner to the Indian Army as well.

The first Drishti-10 Starliner was delivered to the Indian Navy in January this year and the second to Army in June. —*PTI*

Will take action: WB directors to technicians' body

KOLKATA, 4 DEC

Voicing ire over the alleged unrealistic demands of the Federation of Cine Technicians & Workers of Eastern India, a section of Bengali film directors threatened to take legal steps against the technicians' body.

The directors also expressed anguish that a committee, formed following an impasse between the two sides in July to suggest reforms in the existing guidelines, did not have a single meeting though it was supposed to submit its report in November. The panel was constituted following the intervention of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Directors' Association of Eastern India (DAEI) office-bearer Parambrata Chatterjee said they are mulling to file a case against the technicians' federation before the Competition Commission of India (CCI) after consulting lawyers.

The directors accused the technicians' body, headed by senior TMC leader Swaroop Biswas, of imposing its diktat on them and the producers of films, TV serials and web series, which have been affecting the industry.

The main allegation is it wants an "unreasonable" number of crew to be part of projects in the country or abroad, without paying heed to the requirements of the director or producer. —*PTI*

7 detained for Hanuman Chalisa during namaz

VARANASI, 4 DEC

Seven students were detained briefly for reciting Hanuman Chalisa near a mosque on the premises of a college here when their fellow students were offering namaz, police said on Wednesday.

Student leader Vivekanand Singh of Uday Pratap College said the students recited Hanuman Chalisa on Tuesday to protest against "outsiders" gathering at the mosque to offer prayers.

"We have no problem about students offering namaaz or worship in the mosque and temple on the college premises. But we do not approve of outsiders gathering on the college premises in the name of offering namaz," he said.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Varanasi Cantt) Vidush Saxena said, "The police pacified and dispersed them. Seven students were detained but released in the evening." Principal DK Singh said one Wasim Ahmed Khan, a resident of Varanasi, had sent a notice to the college in 2018, claiming that the mosque was donated to the Waqf Board by the Nawab of Tonk, and the land was a Waqf property. The college administration had responded to the notice, saying that the mosque was built illegally, while the property of the college belonged to a trust, and it can neither be bought nor sold. —*PTI*

7-month-old baby girl raped in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 4 DEC

The seven-month-old daughter of a homeless couple was allegedly raped in Kolkata, police said on Wednesday.

The incident came to light after a person called the Burtolla police station on 30 November to report that a girl was sitting alone on the footpath outside his house, crying profusely, they said.

" There were several scratch marks on her body as well, indicating sexual molestation. We have started an investigation," a police officer said. The toddler has been admitted to the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital where she is under treatment, he said.

"Initial investigation revealed that the baby was picked up from the footpath, and taken somewhere and raped. After the crime, she was dropped again. We are checking the CCTV footage," he said. —*PTI*

AFTER DETECTING 'ANOMALY'

ISRO reschedules Proba-3 launch for today

SRIHARIKOTA, 4 DEC

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has rescheduled the launch of PSLV-C59 to Thursday due to an "anomaly" detected in the PROBA-3 spacecraft, the agency announced on Wednesday, minutes before the scheduled launch.

The Bengaluru-headquartered space agency had originally planned the launch at 4.08 pm on Wednesday from the spaceport here.

"Due to an anomaly detected in PROBA-3 spacecraft PSLV-C59/PROBA-3 launch rescheduled to tomorrow at 16:12 hours," the space agency said in an update minute ahead of the lift-off.

Dubbed as world's first initiative of its kind, the Proba-3 (Project for Onboard Anatomy) consists of two satellites -- Coronagraph (310kgs) and Occulter (240kgs) -- in which two spacecraft would fly together as one, maintaining precise formation down to a single millimetre to study the sun's outer atmosphere.

NewSpace India Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO has bagged the order from the European Space Agency (ESA).

According to an ISRO official, scientists at the ESA identified the 'anomaly' in one of the satellites of PSLV-C59-mission, ahead of the lift-off, following which they requested their counterpart to reschedule it to December 5.

The 25-hour countdown was progressing smoothly since it commenced on Tuesday at 3.08 pm and scientists at the spaceport here have been working on preliminary works for the launch.

'Probas' is a Latin word, meaning 'Let's try'.

The mission objective is to demonstrate precise formation flying and the two spacecraft inside the satellites would be launched together in a stacked configuration after the desired orbit level is reached.

The two satellites (Coronagraph and Occulter) would undertake an 18-minute journey to reach the desired orbit.

For ISRO, this launch would provide key insights on taking up scientific experiments on the Sun after its maiden mission--Aditya-L1 which was successfully launched in September 2023. —*PTI*

The PSLV-C59/PROBA-3 Mission, the 61st flight of PSLV and the 26th using PSLV-XL configuration in Sriharikota PHOTO: PTI

HC says no to plea against Sidhu's cancer cure claims

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Observing there still was freedom of speech in the country, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a plea against Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu's claims that certain remedies helped his wife in her battle against stage 4 cancer.

A bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said the former cricketer had only voiced his opinion and the petitioner was also free to counter the claims.

"He is just voicing his opinion. Counter his claims by holding a press conference. Counter free speech by free speech and not by curtailing his free speech under the fear of legal action or contempt. We still have freedom of speech in this country," the bench said.

Navjot Singh Sidhu PHOTO: PTI

At a press conference in Amritsar on 21 November, Sidhu stated that his wife Navjot Kaur Sidhu had been declared cancer-free, emphasising the role of dietary and lifestyle changes in her recovery.

He then said his wife's diet included things like lemon water, raw turmeric, apple cider vinegar, neem leaves, basil, pumpkin, pomegranate, amla, beetroot and walnuts which made her healthy. —*PTI*

DAY OF RAGE

People hold candles during a candlelight vigil against South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, whose failed attempt at imposing martial law sparked anger and dismay in the vibrant democracy, in Seoul, on Wednesday
PHOTO: PTI

PATIENCE, LOYALTY TO BJP PAY OFF FOR FADNAVIS

2024 MAHARASHTRA POLLS

Unlike many leaders across the political spectrum in Maharashtra, BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis has remained untainted by accusations of corruption ***PHOTO: PTI***

Devendra Fadnavis, the political stalwart who rose from humble beginnings to become a key figure in Maharashtra politics, is set to become chief minister -- a position he has held twice before.

The 54-year-old leader, whose career has been marked by a blend of resilience and strategic manoeuvring, is positioned to lead the state for the third time following a decisive showing of the BJP in the 20 November Assembly polls, and his election as leader of the state BJP legislature party on Wednesday.

Fadnavis' political journey has been nothing short of remarkable. From serving as an obscure corporator to becoming the youngest mayor of Nagpur, he has strengthened his status as a prominent leader within his party. Notably, he is only the second Brahmin to serve as Chief Minister of Maharashtra, following the Shiv Sena's Manohar Joshi.

His ascent began in earnest ahead of the 2014 Assembly elections, where he garnered significant support from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and senior BJP leader Amit Shah. Modi famously referred to him as "Nagpur's gift to the country" during a campaign rally, underscoring the confidence placed in Fadnavis.

Though Modi had launched a campaign blitzkrieg in the 2014 Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Assembly polls, a portion of the credit also went to Fadnavis, then state BJP president, for the party's unprecedented victories in the elections.

Devendra cut his teeth in politics at a young age when he joined Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the students wing of RSS, in 1989.

At 22, he became a corporator in the Nagpur civic body and its youngest Mayor in 1997 at the age of 27.

Fadnavis contested his first Assembly election in 1999 and won. There was no looking back for him as he won three subsequent assembly elections. He retained his Nagpur South West seat comfortably in the last month's election.

Unlike many leaders across the political spectrum in Maharashtra, Fadnavis has remained untainted by accusations of corruption.

Fadnavis experienced a setback in the aftermath of the 2019 Assembly elections as the then united Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray pulled out of the pre-poll alliance over sharing of CM's post, shattering the BJP leader's much-hyped "mee punha yein (I will come back again) slogan.

Fadnavis was sworn in as the chief minister for the second time on 23 November, 2019, and Ajit Pawar was sworn in as the deputy chief minister. However, before a Supreme Court-ordered no confidence motion could take place, Fadnavis quit on 26 November, three days after taking oath as the Chief Minister.

Uddhav Thackeray, propped up by Sharad Pawar-led NCP, later became the Chief Minister , but quit after senior Sena leader Eknath Shinde split the party in June 2022 and later became the Chief Minister.

After Thackeray demitted office following the large-scale desertions in the Sena, many political observers thought that Fadnavis, who they knew was behind the episode, would become the Chief Minister. However, tBJP leadership had other plans and a reluctant Fadnavis was asked to occupy the deputy Chief Minister's post.

Though he hails from a politically active family, his father and aunt both served in the Maharashtra Legislative Council, Fadnavis has crafted his own distinct political identity.

Fadnavis' first tenure as the Chief Minister was characterised by a combination of good governance and effective political manoeuvring. He earned praise for his push to expedite infrastructure projects, gaining favour particularly among urban voters.

However, his term was not without challenges. The state suffered significant crop losses due to erratic weather, and his initial rejection of loan waiver for affected farmers sparked widespread protests.

Another major issue during his tenure was the Maratha community's demand for reservations. Though he passed legislation to meet these demands, the subsequent Supreme Court ruling that overturned the law left many in the Maratha community dissatisfied, blaming Fadnavis for the failure.

Fadnavis' career has, thus far, been defined by resilience, adaptability and strategic insight. His ability to adapt and make tactical decisions could prove crucial for him and his party in the coming days.

—PTI

SALAR سالار

The new Marburg virus triggers global fear

Marburg is a rare but severe viral hemorrhagic fever, similar to Ebola, that can cause serious illness and death ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Republic of Rwanda has confirmed more than 60 cases of Marburg virus also known as the bleeding eye virus (Marburg) primarily associated with hospitals in Kigali, including some deaths. This is the country's first Marburg outbreak.

Marburg is a rare but severe viral hemorrhagic fever, similar to Ebola, that can cause serious illness and death.

Currently, no cases of Marburg related to this outbreak have been reported outside of Rwanda.

The risk of infection with this virus in the United States is low.

On 27 September, the Rwanda Ministry of Health reported cases of Marburg in the country, including cases among healthcare workers. Illnesses have been associated with hospitals in Kigali.

As of 29 November, Rwanda has recorded 66 illnesses and 15 deaths from Marburg. Approximately 75 percent of patients with Marburg have recovered. No new cases of Marburg have been identified since 30 October.

Marburg outbreaks are declared over if no new infections arise during the 42 days after the last recovered patient has tested negative twice by PCR separated by 48 hours. The Rwanda Ministry of Health has begun this 42-day countdown. If no new cases occur during the 42-day countdown, WHO and Rwandan health authorities could declare the outbreak officially over on 22 December.

Contact tracing and testing efforts continue. In addition, trials with an investigational vaccine are underway in Rwanda via the Ministry of Health, with a focus on healthcare workers.Most of the people infected have been health workers, particularly those who worked in intensive care units. CDC continues to work closely with in-country partners to help enhance infection prevention and control in healthcare facilities. To date, there have been no reported cases of Marburg outside of Rwanda. As of 21 October, 2024, the risk to the United States from the Marburg virus outbreak in Rwanda is low. Centre for Disease and Prevention (CDC) has had a presence in Rwanda since 2002, when CDC established an office there. CDC is providing technical support to the Rwanda Ministry of Health during the Marburg outbreak, while continuing to address other global public health priorities.

CDC has deployed several scientists to assist Rwanda with its investigation and response to Marburg.

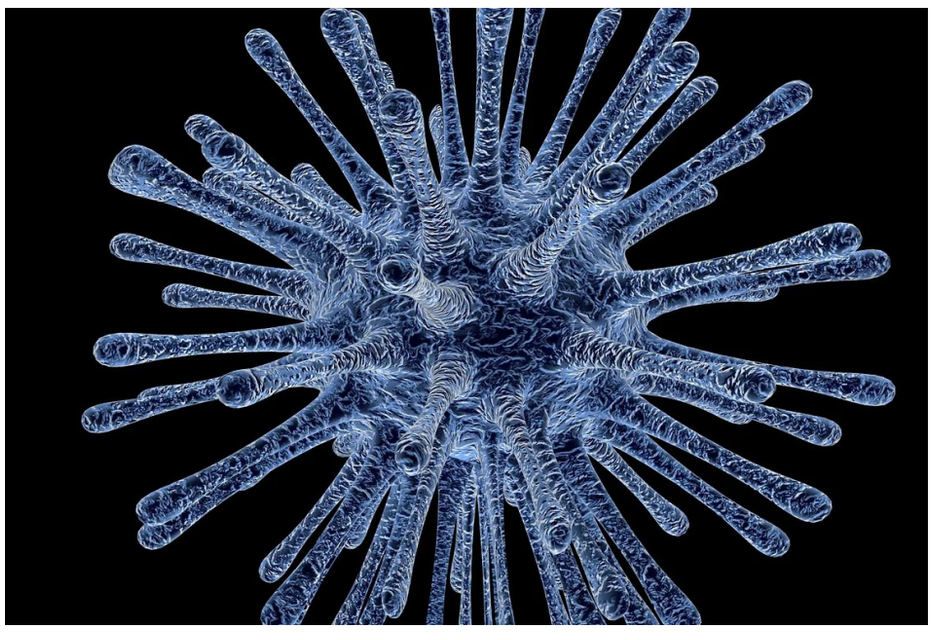
CDC staff are applying their experience from responding to outbreaks of Marburg and similar diseases in other countries to help strengthen surveillance in healthcare facilities, provide technical assistance for monitoring and supporting recovered patients, improve infection prevention and control in healthcare settings, strengthen laboratory biosafety and biosecurity, develop areas of technical support in ecology studies and laboratory efforts.

CDC is raising awareness of the outbreak with healthcare providers in the United States, including the latest guidance for them to be aware of the potential for imported cases and what to do if a patient is suspected of having Marburg.

CDC has information and recommendations for members of the public, including people living in Rwanda.

In Rwanda and across the region, CDC continues to engage with its domestic and international public health partners and with other US government agencies to support Rwanda's response, share information, and help ensure partner countries are ready to respond if Marburg spreads across international borders.

—US Centre for Disease and Prevention



Most of the people infected have been health workers, particularly those who worked in intensive care units ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

India needs sustainable, community-driven disaster response

India's vulnerability to natural disasters remains high — 58.6 per cent of its area is prone to earthquakes, 12 per cent is susceptible to floods and river erosion and 68 per cent of land is at risk of drought ***PHOTO: PTI***

India's disaster management framework has certainly come a long way, evolving into a comprehensive system that spans prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction phases.

As a country with vast geographic and environmental diversity, India's vulnerability to natural disasters remains high — 58.6 per cent of its area is prone to earthquakes, more than 12 per cent is susceptible to floods and river erosion and 68 per cent of cultivable land is at risk of drought.

The presence National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Forces (SDRF), paramilitary units, Aapda Mitra and the army have improved immediate response capacity considerably. However, despite these advances, a critical gap remains, that is, sustainable resilience.

While disaster response mechanisms demonstrate strength, long-term recovery and community resilience are often sidelined. The aftermath of recent disasters, such as building collapses and floods in Uttarakhand in 2021 and Himachal Pradesh in 2024, which claimed lives and destroyed property, underscores this need.

Emergency response should extend beyond immediate relief, focusing on a holistic approach that empowers local communities, reduces dependency and fosters resilient infrastructure. Excessive reliance on external aid, though essential in severe cases, can hinder community empowerment. Each year, as floods and cyclones ravage coastal and flood-prone regions, citizens turn to NDRF and SDRF, who execute well-coordinated rescue and relief operations. The NDRF's 12 battalions, each with 1,149 personnel, have earned a reputation for efficient disaster response operations. Yet, dependency on such agencies over time may weaken the focus on local resilience.

Although local leaders have sometimes taken charge in the absence of immediate aid, a consistent framework for training, equipping and empowering them could foster greater community self-sufficiency. In the immediate aftermath of disasters, relief materials and aid pour in, but these quick-fix measures often neglect environmental concerns.

Temporary shelters, unmanaged waste and contamination of local resources can lead to pollution. For instance, clean-up operations in flood-hit areas often fail to preserve water quality, resulting in long-term contamination issues that harm health and livelihoods.

Environmental sustainability, also often overlooked in emergency relief, must be a priority in resilience-building policies. Eco-friendly materials for shelters and effective waste management practices can ensure that temporary solutions do not leave lasting environmental impacts.

India's approach to disaster preparedness often involves setting up temporary shelters for anticipated events like cyclones and floods. While helpful, this response is not enough for communities that face recurrent threats. Instead, resilient infrastructure — storm-resistant buildings, elevated embankments in flood-prone zones — would enhance self-reliance.

Such durable solutions not only offer safety during disasters but also minimise the psychological and economic stress of repeated displacement. The recurring floods in Bihar, Odisha and Assam underscore the need for such infrastructure; relying on temporary solutions in these areas perpetuates instability. Long-term resilience against natural disasters also calls for nature-based solutions. Mangrove plantations along coastlines serve as natural barriers against cyclones, while wetland restoration absorbs floodwaters, shielding inland areas.

India's extensive 7,516km coastline is highly susceptible to cyclones and tsunamis, NDMA highlights. Restoring mangroves and safeguarding coastal wetlands could reduce the impact of these hazards, foster biodiversity, and improve local livelihoods.

Promoting ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies could fundamentally change the design of disaster preparedness in India. Encouraging mangrove and wetland restoration in cyclone-prone regions offers immediate defense and long-term ecological and economic benefits. Integrating these natural barriers into disaster management frameworks could use India's resources strategically to mitigate risks and strengthen resilience.

Minimising dependence on external aid through local empowerment and accounting for environmental impacts in relief actions are key steps. By building resilient infrastructure and embracing ecosystem-based DRR strategies, communities can become more self-reliant.

While India's current framework demonstrates significant advances, it also signals an urgent need for evolution. Shifting towards sustainable, community-driven strategies that emphasise resilience, environmental care and self-sufficiency can help the nation not only respond to but also recover from natural disasters in a way that empowers every level of society.

A strong plan should also address the root causes of Loss and Damage and bring together responses to crises like disasters, environmental emergencies, disease outbreaks and accidents. Since these often share common agencies and resources, better coordination can make responses more efficient.

Also, with the actions for the 15th Finance Commission underway, this presents a key opportunity to drive the desired transformation through disaster risk management finance, which will also help strengthen resources at the state, district and local levels. This holistic approach will strengthen India's preparedness, while supporting long-term development and security.

—DowntoEarth

Officials say Guinea football stampede toll to touch 135

CONAKRY, 4 DEC

A distraught Kambaly Kouroumah is searching for his teenage brother, Adama, at a local morgue in southern Guinea's Nzerekore city, where dozens of people died at a crowded stadium after chaos erupted during a soccer game. Kouroumah is one of many bereaved people searching hospitals and mortuaries for missing relatives following Sunday's tragic events during the final of a national tournament honouring military leader Mamadi Doumbouya. Official estimates say 56 people died in the crush, but the unofficial death toll is at least 135, according to the Collective of Human Rights Organisations of the Nzerekore region. More than 50 people remain missing. Chaos had erupted at the crowded and open stadium after fans protested a referee's penalty call and were throwing stones towards the field.—*PTI*

Martial law: South Korean Prez faces impeachment

The motion by Oppn parties will be put to vote on Friday

SEOUL, 4 DEC

South Korea's Opposition parties on Wednesday submitted a motion to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol, who is facing pressure to leave office hours after he ended a short-lived martial law that prompted troops to encircle Parliament before lawmakers voted to lift it.

Impeaching Yoon would require the support of two-thirds of Parliament and then the backing of at least six Constitutional Court justices. The motion, submitted jointly by the main Opposition Democratic Party and five smaller parties, could be put to a vote as early as Friday.

Yoon's senior advisers and secretaries offered to resign and his Cabinet members, including Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun, were also facing calls to step down.

- On Tuesday, Yoon abruptly imposed the emergency martial law, vowing to eliminate "anti-state" forces after he struggled to push forward his agenda in the Parliament.

On Tuesday night, Yoon abruptly imposed the emergency martial law, vowing to eliminate "anti-state" forces after he struggled to push forward his agenda in the Opposition-dominated Parliament. But his martial law was effective for only about six hours, as the National Assembly voted to overrule the president.

Yoon Suk Yeol *PHOTO: BRITANNICA*

The declaration was formally lifted around 4:30 am during a Cabinet meeting.

The liberal opposition Democratic Party holds a majority in the 300-seat parliament.

Impeaching Yoon would require support 200 of its 300 members.

The Democratic Party and other small opposition parties together have 192 seats. But when the Parliament rejected Yoon's martial law declaration in a 190-0 vote, 18 lawmakers from Yoon's ruling People Power Party cast ballots supporting the rejection, according to National Assembly officials.

The leader of the People Power Party, Han Dong-hun, who has long ties with Yoon dating to their days as prosecutors, criticised Yoon's martial law declaration as "unconstitutional." If Yoon is impeached, he'll be stripped of his constitutional powers until the Constitutional Court can rule on his fate.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, the No 2 position in the South Korean government, would take over his presidential responsibilities. —*PTI*

CLASHES IN WEST BANK

People wait to receive meals distributed by aid agencies in Gaza City *PHOTO: X@LAZAR_BERMAN*

Hamas, Fatah near deal on governing postwar Gaza

CAIRO, 4 DEC

Palestinian officials say Fatah and Hamas are closing in on an agreement to appoint a committee of politically independent technocrats to administer the Gaza Strip after the war. It would effectively end Hamas' rule and could help advance ceasefire talks with Israel.

The rival factions have made several failed attempts to reconcile since Hamas seized power in Gaza in 2007. Israel has meanwhile ruled out any postwar role in Gaza for either Hamas or Fatah, which dominates the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

A Palestinian Authority official on Tuesday confirmed that a preliminary agreement had been reached following weeks of negotiations in Cairo. The official said the committee would have 12-15 members, most of them from Gaza.

It would report to the Palestinian Authority, which is headquartered in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and work with local and international parties to facilitate humanitarian assistance and reconstruction.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Hamas is dismantled and scores of hostages are returned. He says Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and continue to hold corridors within the territory, with civilian affairs in the rest administered by local Palestinians unaffiliated with the Palestinian Authority or Hamas. Meanwhile, Jewish settlers mounted a string of attacks on Palestinian towns in the West Bank overnight, burning homes and clashing with Israeli troops. There were no immediate reports of any Palestinian casualties. The Israeli military said Jewish settlers attacked the village of Beit Furik after troops arrived in the area to dismantle an unauthorised farming outpost they had built nearby. —*PTI*

Trump's quip of Canada as US state a joke: Minister

TORONTO, 4 DEC

President-elect Donald Trump was joking when he suggested Canada becomes the 51st US state during a dinner with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, a Canadian minister who attended their recent dinner said on Tuesday. Fox News reported that Trump made the comment in response to Trudeau raising concerns that Trump's threatened tariffs on Canada would damage Canada's economy. About 77 per cent of Canada's exports go to the US. Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, who attended the Friday dinner at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club, said Trump's comments were in jest. "The president was telling jokes. The president was teasing us. It was, of course, on that issue, in no way a serious comment," he said in Ottawa. —*PTI*

Trump's lawyers urge judge to toss hush money case

NEW YORK, 4 DEC

President-elect Donald Trump's lawyers formally asked a judge Monday to throw out his hush money criminal conviction, arguing continuing the case would present unconstitutional "disruptions to the institution of the Presidency".

In a filing made public Tuesday, Trump's lawyers told Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan that dismissal is warranted because of the "overwhelming national mandate granted to him by the American people on November 5, 2024."

Donald Trump *PHOTO: X*

They also cited President Joe Biden's recent pardon of his son, Hunter Biden, who had been convicted of tax and gun charges.

Prosecutors will have until Dec. 9 to respond. They have said they will fight any efforts to dismiss the case but have indicated a willingness to delay the sentencing until after Trump's second term ends in 2029.

Trump has been fighting for months to reverse his conviction on 34 counts of falsifying business records to conceal a $130,000 payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels to suppress her claim that they had sex a decade earlier. —*PTI*

Kash, Trump's FBI pick, targeted in hack: Reports

US President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for Federal Bureau of Investigation director Kash Patel, , was notified by the agency that it had been targeted in an "Iranian hack," CNN reported, citing sources. According to source, the hackers may have accessed some of Patel's communications. —*Agencies*

Hegseth faces scrutiny in US Senate

Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Defence Secretary, spent a second day Tuesday on Capitol Hill, meeting privately with Republican senators amid rising questions about his ability to effectively lead the Pentagon. Hegseth is running into que stions amid a sexual assault allegation, which he has denied, and other emerging reports about his work conduct and history. —*PTI*

French govt on brink of fall ahead of no-trust vote

PARIS, 4 DEC

France is staring into the unknown as the minority government of the Prime Minister Michel Barnier faces near-certain defeat in a no-confidence vote that could intensify the political crisis in one of the EU's key member states.

If the vote on Wednesday is carried, Barnier's administration, which took office only in September, would be the first in France to be ousted with a motion of no confidence since 1962.

The vote risked making "everything more difficult and more serious", a sombre Barnier told MPs on Tuesday, adding that France's situation was already "difficult in budgetary and financial terms" and "very difficult in economic and social terms".

Two separate no-confidence motions have been tabled, by the Far-Left and Far-Right Opposition, with the former widely predicted to pass.

President Emmanuel Macron, who is on a visit to Saudi Arabia, is expected to return to France for what the media have described as a "moment of truth" that risked "plunging France into the great political and financial unknown".

Michel Barnier *PHOTO: X*

- Two separate no-confidence motions have been tabled, by the Far-Left and Far-Right Opposition.

France's political crisis, brewing over the past three months, finally erupted on Monday when Barnier said he would push the social security component of his fragile government's 2025 Budget through Parliament without a vote.

The constitutional measure allowing him to do so, known as article 49.3, offers MPs the chance to challenge the government's move through a no-confidence motion voted on within 48 hours. If the vote is successful, the government is out. —*The Guardian*

UK warns of terror attacks in Bangladesh

LONDON, 4 DEC

The UK government has updated its travel advisory for Bangladesh to caution against travel to the country where "terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks".

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) reviewed the "Safety and Security" section of its advisory for Bangladesh on Tuesday evening.

The update adds to its overall standing advice against "all but essential travel" to the South Asian nation.

"Terrorist attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreign nationals, such as crowded areas, religious buildings, (and) political rallies," the advisory goes on.

People from Bangladesh stage a rally near US' White House demanding release of Hindu monk Chinmaya Das *PHOTO: PTI*

'700 inmates, 70 extremists, on run after jailbreaks'

At least 700 inmates, including convicted Islamist militants and death row prisoners, remained on the run since they fled in jailbreak incidents during the July-August students' uprising that led to the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime, officials said on Wednesday. —*PTI*

Respect freedom: US tells B'desh

WASHINGTON, 4 DEC

The United States on Tuesday called for respect for fundamental freedoms, including religious and basic human rights, in Bangladesh amid attacks on minorities.

India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country. "We are consistent with every government in which we have a relationship with. We are clear that there needs to be the respect of fundamental freedoms," said State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel. —*PTI*

Chinese boats 'taunt' Philippine Navy vessels

MANILA, 4 DEC

Chinese coast guard vessels, backed by navy ships, fired powerful water cannons and blocked and sideswiped a Philippine patrol vessel on Wednesday in renewed aggression in a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, Philippine officials said. Three Philippine coast guard and bureau of fisheries vessels were on routine patrol to protect Filipino fishermen at the Scarborough Shoal when several Chinese coast guard and navy ships approached and staged "aggressive actions" after dawn, the Philippine coast guard said. There was no immediate comment from Chinese officials. In the past, they have repeatedly cited China's sovereignty in the contested offshore region and their determination to defend what they say is their territory.—*PTI*

Dropping EU bid fuels protests in Georgia

TBILISI, 4 DEC

Thousands of demonstrators in the Georgian capital converged on their Parliament again on Tuesday, venting outrage against the governing party's decision to suspend negotiations on joining the European Union (EU).

Like on five previous nights, riot police used water cannons and tear gas to push back the protesters, who threw fireworks at police officers and built barricades on the Georgian capital's central boulevard. Nearly 300 protesters have been detained, and 26 people, including three police officers, have been hospitalised with injuries.

"The more force they use, the angrier people become, because everyone they arrest has relatives, and everyone

PHOTO: X@EESC_LT

Pak court grants interim bail to Imran's wife

ISLAMABAD, 4 DEC

The Peshawar High Court has approved the interim bail of former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi until 23 December. The decision was made after the court heard her request for corridor bail in multiple cases, The Express Tribune reported. Justice Waqar Ahmed conducted the hearing in the court. During the hearing, lawyer Alam Khan Adeen Zai appeared on behalf of Bushra Bibi. Zai said that his client had requested for corridor bail in 27 cases because of the multiple charges filed against her. The Additional Attorney General requested the court to ensure that Bushra Bibi appears before the relevant courts as per the legal requirements, reported The Express Tribune. —*PTI*

OPPOSITION AGAINST PRESIDENT

Syrian forces battle insurgents in Hama

BEIRUT, 4 DEC

Syria on Wednesday said its counteroffensive has pushed back insurgents attempting to advance to the strategic central city of Hama, while the insurgency says it captured more Syrian troops and Iran-backed militants in fierce battles.

The latest flareup in Syria's long civil war comes after forces opposed to Syrian President Bashar Assad over the past days captured large parts of the northern city of Aleppo, the country's largest, as well as towns and villages in southern parts of the northwestern Idlib province.

The war between Assad and his foreign backers and the array of armed opposition forces seeking his overthrow has killed an estimated half-million people over the past 13 years.

Syrian opposition fighters stand atop a seized military armored vehicle on the outskirts of Hama, Syria *PHOTO: PTI*

Syrian state media SANA said insurgents retreated some 20km from government-held Hama, Syria's fourth largest city, as government troops backed by Russian airpower entrenched themselves in the outskirts. Fierce fighting has raged for days as Damascus fears that the insurgents will make their way into the city like they did over the weekend into Aleppo.

The insurgency through its Military Operations Department channel on the Telegram app said they captured five Iran-backed militants, of whom two were from Afghanistan, as well as three Syrian troops from its 25th Special Mission Forces Division in eastern Hama. The claims could not be independently confirmed. If the insurgents seize Hama city and control the province, it could leave the coastal cities of Tartous and Lattakia isolated from the rest of the country. Lattakia is a key political stronghold for Assad and Syria's Alawite community and a strategic Russian naval base. —*PTI*

Taliban bans women from training as midwives

KABUL, 4 DEC

Women in Afghanistan have been banned from training to become midwives in the latest crackdown unveiled by the Taliban.

Trainee midwifery students, who have been ordered to no longer attend classes, urged Taliban leaders to allow them to continue studying.

A director at leading global charity Human Rights Watch said the measures would lead to women and girls dying due to struggling to receive healthcare during childbirth.

Sources close to the Taliban's Ministry of Public Health told BBC Radio 4's World at One they have received orders to shut medical institutions to female students until further notice.

Several midwifery institutions in different provinces in Afghanistan confirmed the ban is in place to the news outlet. The Taliban have also banned women from being treated by male healthcare professionals. Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of deaths in childbirth in the world – with one woman estimated to die every two hours. —*The Independent*

PHOTO: X

Rupee plummets to all-time low of 84.76

MUMBAI, 4 DEC

The rupee slumped to its all-time low of 84.76 (provisional) against the US dollar after dropping 8 paise on Wednesday amid a strengthening greenback and increase in crude prices. Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equity markets and foreign fund inflows supported the local unit at lower level. At the interbank currency exchange, the rupee opened at 84.66 and traded in the range of 84.65-84.76. Eventually it settled at 84.76 (provisional), 8 paise lower than Tuesday's close of 84.68. Meanwhile, the dollar index was trading higher by 0.11 per cent at 106.47. —*PTI*

Gold slips below ₹79,000 per 10 gm on reduced demand

MUMBAI, 4 DEC

Gold prices slipped below Rs 79,000 per 10 kg in the national capital on Wednesday due to poor offtake by stockists and retailers amid weak global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity fell by Rs 150 to Rs 78,850 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 79,000 per 10 grams in the previous session. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity extended the losses for the third straight day, declining by Rs 150 to Rs 78,450 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 78,600 per 10 grams. However, silver rose Rs 100 to Rs 92,500 per kg. On Tuesday, the white metal had settled at Rs 92,400 per kg. —*PTI*

Google, Telangana join hands for Hyd safety hub

HYDERABAD, 4 DEC

Telangana government on Wednesday said it has entered into a strategically-crucial and broad ranging partnership with Google under which the latter is committed to establishing India's first Google Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) here. GSEC in Hyderabad would be the second-of-its-kind in the Asia-PAcific region, after Tokyo, and only the fifth in the world, with similar facilities in Dublin, Munich and Malaga. This GSEC is a specialized international cybersecurity hub that will play a vital role in developing advanced security and online safety products for the Indian context, a press release from the state government said. —*PTI*

By 2027, India's power sector needs ₹15L cr for capacity

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

About Rs 15 lakh crore fund is required to add electricity generation capacity during 2022-27, which includes expenditure for projects to be commissioned in 2027-32, a power ministry statement said. The projected electrical energy requirement and peak electricity demand on all-India basis is estimated as 1908 BU (billion units) and 277 GW, respectively for 2026-27. The projections were made during a Meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of Members of Parliament for Ministry of Power here last evening. Union Power Minister Manohar Lal chaired the meeting. As per 20th Electric Power Survey (EPS) report published by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), the peak demand and energy requirement is pegged at around 366 GW and 2474 BU by 2031-32, it stated. The peak demand has grown at a CAGR of 16 per cent from 2013-14 to 2023-24 while energy requirement has grown at a rate of 5 per cent during 2013-14 to 2023-24. —*PTI*

Sensex rises 110 pts on pvt bank gains, FDI inflows

NSE Nifty rises marginally by 10.30 points to 24,467.45

MUMBAI, 4 DEC

Benchmark Sensex advanced 110 points on Wednesday, extending its gains to the fourth day in a row helped by buying in HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and fresh foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share barometer rose by 110.58 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 80,956.33. During the day, it jumped 399.64 points or 0.49 per cent to 81,245.39.

The NSE Nifty rose marginally by 10.30 points or 0.04 per cent to 24,467.45.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank were the biggest gainers.

Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Adani Ports, Power Grid, Maruti, ITC, Reliance Industries and UltraTech Cement were among the laggards.

Foreign institutional investors turned buyers on Tuesday as they bought equities worth Rs 3,664.67 crore, according to exchange data.

Among Asian markets, Tokyo settled higher while Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading mostly higher. US markets ended mostly in the positive territory on Tuesday.

Airtel, Tata, Adani Ports among the laggards PHOTO: X

India's services PMI slipped to 58.4 in November while employment in the segment recorded robust growth, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude firmed up by 0.34 per cent to USD 73.91 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 597.67 points or 0.74 per cent to settle at 80,845.75 on Tuesday. The Nifty went up by 181.10 points or 0.75 per cent to 24,457.15. —*PTI*

SWIGGY SHARES CLIMB NEARLY 7%

Shares of food and grocery delivery platform Swiggy on Wednesday jumped nearly 7 per cent after the firm reported narrowing of consolidated net loss at Rs 625.53 crore for the second quarter ended September 30 on the back of continued growth of food delivery business. The stock surged 6.69 per cent to Rs 534.85 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock soared 6.56 per cent to Rs 534.80. The company, which declared its quarterly results to stock exchanges for the first time since it went public last month, had posted a net loss of Rs 657 crore in the year-ago period. —*PTI*

Reliance Power shares jump 5%

Shares of Reliance Power jumped 5 per cent on Wednesday after Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) said it has withdrawn the debarment notice issued to the company enabling the Anil Ambani-led firm to participate in future tenders of the public sector entity. The stock climbed 4.98 per cent to Rs 41.07 -- its upper circuit limit -- on the BSE. At the NSE, it surged 4.98 per cent to hit the highest trading permissible limit for the day. —*PTI*

AFTER DELHI-DUBAI DRAMA

JioHotstar domain finally with Ambani's Viacom 18

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

- Viacom18, which operates popular platforms like JioCinema, has been pursuing strategies to strengthen its position in entertainment ecosystem

The JioHotstar domain has officially come under the ownership of Viacom18, the media and entertainment company supported by Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries. According to the latest Whois data, the domain is now registered in Viacom18's name. This acquisition signals a significant move by the company as it continues to expand its digital presence and challenge the dominance of global and local players in India's growing OTT (over-the-top).

Viacom18, which operates popular platforms like JioCinema, has been aggressively pursuing strategies to strengthen its position in the entertainment ecosystem. JioCinema gained significant traction with high-profile content acquisitions and partnerships, including streaming rights for the IPL and blockbuster releases.

The acquisition of the JioHotstar domain may indicate the company's plans to draw Disney+ Hotstar's user base or leverage the well-known "Hotstar" branding to further bolster its portfolio.

Although there hasn't been an official announcement on how the JioHotstar domain will be utilised, industry experts believe it could play a crucial role in Viacom18's strategy to integrate its offerings and appeal to a broader audience. The move also comes at a time when competition in the streaming industry is at an all-time high, with platforms vying for market share through innovative content, pricing strategies, and user enhancements.

This development highlights Reliance's focus on consolidating its digital assets under one umbrella and positioning itself as a leader in India's entertainment sector. By acquiring this domain, Viacom18 is making a statement about its ambitions in a market projected to grow exponentially in the coming years.

— *Agencies*

Trump's tariff policy opens export doors for India, says Niti Aayog CEO

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

US President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to impose high tariffs on three of its trading partners, including China will provide huge export opportunities for India and the domestic industry should prepare itself to tap into that, Niti Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said on Wednesday.

Trump last week vowed to introduce 25 per cent tariffs (or customs duty) on imports from Mexico and Canada and an additional 10 per cent on China.

"Whatever Trump has announced so far...I think there are opportunities for India. We are a man at first slip, the ball is coming in our direction. Are we going to hold it or drop the catch, it's for us to see...and I think, you will see some steps in next few months," he Subrahmanyam told reporters here.

He said there is going to be huge disruptions because of that in the US trade and that would open up "huge" opportunities for India.

BVR Subrahmanyam PHOTO: PTI

"The question is if we actually prepare ourselves, it can lead to a massive boom... because there is going to be trade diversion," he added.

"Our relationship with the US is multi-dimensional. It is very deep. It's not standing only on one leg which is trade, there are many many other dimensions. The two nations have a much deeper relationship and all these things will be taken into account," he said.

He has also warned BRICS countries against any move to replace the US dollar and has sought a commitment from the nine-member group that includes India, Russia, China, and Brazil, among others.

Niti Aayog also unveiled a report on India's trade. It will be released on a quarterly basis. Subrahmanyam said trade needs to be promoted to make a developed nation. —*PTI*

INDIA'S TRADE CONCERNS

US lawmaker seeks 'robust tariffs' on ceramic tiles

WASHINGTON, 4 DEC

Ahead of his party coming to power, a GOP lawmaker has demanded a "robust tariffs" on Indian ceramic tile imports claiming that the tile manufacturing industry in his state has been negatively impacted by the "unfair and uncompetitive" trade practices of Indian exporters, threatening good-paying manufacturing jobs in Tennessee.

Tennessee's manufacturers deserve a fair shake on the world stage, he said, adding that India's underhanded subsidisation and dumping of ceramic tile is upending the domestic market and hemming in American manufacturers.

In May, the department announced initiation of anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations on ceramic tile from India.

Recently, Commerce published its primary determination in the countervailing duty investigation, which the signers argue should be reevaluated and revised. The letter dated November 27 was made public on December 3.

PHOTO: X

According to the letter, over the past decade, India's tile sales in the US increased from 344,000 square feet in 2013 to approximately 405 million square feet by the end of 2023.

In April 2024, US ceramic tile manufacturers sounded the alarm on Indian ceramic tile flooding the US market and requested the imposition of an antidumping and countervailing duty.

The industry estimated reasonable tariffs between 408 per cent and 828 per cent would offset India's ongoing unfair advantages. —*PTI*

SEBI sets uniform nomination rules in securities mkt

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Markets regulator SEBI has notified rules on nomination allowing nominees to act on behalf of incapacitated investors.

Additionally, it notified the rule mandating every participant to provide beneficial owners with the option to nominate a person to whom their securities will transfer upon their death.

"Every participant shall provide an option to the beneficial owner to nominate, in the manner as may be specified, a person who shall be authorised to conduct transactions on behalf of the beneficial owner in the event of the incapacitation of the beneficial owner," SEBI said.

The new rules are aimed at enhancing investor convenience and introducing uniform standards for nomination facilities across the Indian securities market.

The owners can collectively nominate a person to receive the securities in the event of death of all the joint beneficial owners. —*PTI*

SIMPLIFY TDS SYSTEM: DELOITTE

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

A vast majority of income tax filers want simplified ITRs for individuals, easier way for computing incentives and deductions, and simplification of TDS framework for 'one rate one section', a Deloitte survey said on Wednesday.

Deloitte's Income-Tax Policy Survey also suggested doing away with the requirement of issuing Form 16A as the TDS information is already reported and available in the Form 26AS and AIS of the recipient.

The survey also suggested limiting the number of sections with regard to withholding tax, classifying payments into two-to-three distinct and non-overlapping categories, and ensuring that each section has only one rate, which will significantly reduce the burden of compliance without any major loss in tax collections from a tax administrative. —*PTI*

Housing deficit could reach 31.2M units

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

India is estimated to have a cumulative affordable housing shortage of 31.2 million units by 2030, creating a potential market size of Rs 67 trillion for real estate developers, according to a joint report by CII and Knight Frank.

Industry body CII and real estate consultant Knight Frank India on Wednesday released a joint report 'Affordable Housing in India' at a conference here, pointing out that there is already an existing shortage of 10.1 million units.

Addressing the event, Ghulam Zia, Senior Executive Director, Research, Advisory, Infrastructure & Valuation at Knight Frank India, pointed out the shortage of affordable housing in India, presenting a huge business opportunity for real estate developers.

The affordable housing segment also could provide a lot of opportunities for financial institutions.

- This represents a substantial increase, being three times more than the existing loan volume in this segment

This represents a substantial increase, being three times more than the existing loan volume in this segment, it added.

HDFC Capital MD and CEO Vipul Roongta stressed on scale of operations and the right marketing strategy for the affordable and mid-income housing segment.

Roongta said his company focuses on financing the middle and low-income housing segment, which it defines as homes below Rs 2 crore in Delhi and Mumbai and lower than Rs 1 crore in other cities.

It suggested the provision of vacant PSU lands for affordable housing development under public-private partnership. —*PTI*

'14-HR WORK, 2AM MEETINGS'

Zepto accused of 'toxic' work culture, CEO reacts

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Aadit Palicha, CEO of Zepto, has responded to recent allegations about the company's work culture following a viral Reddit post that criticised the startup for fostering a toxic environment. The post, shared on the r/StartUpIndia page by an anonymous user, accused Zepto of demanding 14-hour workdays and raising concerns about burnout and a lack of work-life balance.

Titled 'Toxic Work Culture ft. Zepto', the post detailed the alleged experiences of a Zepto employee who claimed to have worked at the company for a year. The individual described the environment as the 'most toxic work culture,' claiming that Palicha often starts his workday 'only at 2pm' due to an inability to wake up early, which leads to meetings being scheduled at odd hours, including 2am. The employee also alleged that meetings were delayed or rescheduled.

PHOTO: X

Further, the post stated that Zepto primarily hires young employees because "senior people do not want to work in such a culture," and these young recruits are made to work 14-hour days. The post also added that in March there will be a massive round of layoffs and hirings are stopped for most of the departments.

The employee further alleged that "the app employs several dark patterns to extract money from customers in various ways, including charging higher fees for phones worth more than Rs 30,000.

In response to the accusations, Palicha acknowledged the demanding nature of startup life, particularly in the early growth phases. He explained that long hours are a reality in fast-growing companies, but emphasised that he does not support a toxic work culture. Palicha assured that while Zepto's focus has been on driving success, and is committed employee well-being.

While Palicha has pledged to address these issues, he continues to defend the rigorous demands that come with building a rapidly expanding business. —*Agencies*

Since 2005, India sees record growth in services sector jobs

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

India's service sector continued its impressive performance in November 2024, with services sector employment notably grew at the fastest pace ever recorded since this survey began in 2005.

The HSBC India Services Business Activity Index recorded a robust 58.4, slightly down from 58.5 in October. According to HSBC PMI, this seasonally adjusted index, compiled by S&P Global, highlights a sharp rate of expansion well above its historical average. Strong domestic and international demand fuelled this growth, alongside gains in new business.

Despite a marginal easing in the growth of total sales compared to October, the sales index remained significantly above its long-term trend.

Firms reported sustained demand strength, leading to heightened output and a surge in job creation. Employment in the services sector grew at the fastest pace since the survey's inception in December 2005, reflecting a combination of permanent hires.

The remarkable expansion in employment came at a cost, as input price pressures intensified. November saw input costs rise at their steepest rate in 15 months, driven by higher food and labour expenses.

The services sector outperformed manufacturing in terms of employment growth and cost pressures. Service providers reported sharper increases in input and output prices compared to manufacturers. —*ANI*

Bangladesh beats West Indies by 101 runs

KINGSTON, 4 DEC

Bangladesh won a test in the Caribbean for the first time in 15 years by beating the West Indies by 101 runs inside four days at Sabina Park. Bangladesh set West Indies 287 to win in five and a bit sessions and the West Indies managed to bat less than two sessions, all out for 185. The Bangladeshis had lost their last seven tests in the Caribbean, including the first one of this series in Antigua last week. They have tied the short series. "This was enjoyable," Bangladesh stand-in captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz said. "We were not thinking negatively. The boys bowled especially well. Nahid (Rana) in the first innings, Taskin (Ahmed) and Hasan Mahmud. Second-innings specialist Taijul (Islam) got five wickets. He was excellent. He has been very good for the last 10 years, more than 200 wickets for us."

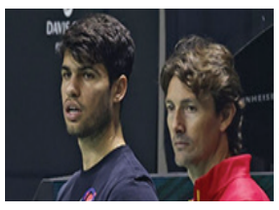


PHOTO: X

Alcaraz adds 2nd coach Lopez to work with Ferrero

NEW YORK, 4 DEC

Carlos Alcaraz will have an additional coach with him when the 2025 season begins. The four-time Grand Slam champion has hired Samuel Lopez to work alongside Juan Carlos Ferrero, who has coached the Spaniard since he was 15 years old. Lopez has coached Ferrero, among other players. Alcaraz, 21, believes the pairing can help push him back to the top of the rankings. "I think Samuel, for me, is one of the best coaches that we have on tour," Alcaraz said Tuesday, the day before a scheduled exhibition match against Ben Shelton at Madison Square Garden. "They trust each other 100 percent and being able to travel with both, for me, it's going to be great.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Lewis faces end of an amazing Mercedes journey

LUSAIL, 4 DEC

Lewis Hamilton is looking back on an "amazing journey" and the most successful partnership in Formula 1 history as he prepares to bid farewell to Mercedes this week and join Ferrari. The move offers a new start for the 39-year-old Hamilton, who's had a difficult end to his last Mercedes season. Ferrari's first task next year might be to get him back on form. "I don't think we're going to end up on a high," Hamilton said Sunday after finishing 12th in Qatar in another tough race which saw him get penalties, a puncture, and even ask Mercedes for permission to retire the car. —*PTI*

Pope wicketkeeper for England in 2nd Test against NZ

WELLINGTON, 4 DEC

England has kept Ollie Pope as its stand-in wicketkeeper for the second Test against New Zealand starting Thursday. After Jordan Cox broke his thumb ahead of the series opener in Christchurch last week, Ollie Robinson was called up as wicketkeeping cover and was in contention to make his maiden international appearance in the second Test at Wellington's Basin Reserve. However, England kept faith with the same team that won by eight wickets on the fourth afternoon of the first test at Hagley Oval, meaning Pope retained the gloves and Jacob Bethell stayed at No. 3.—*PTI*

Kohli nearly mobbed; no fans allowed at team India's practice

Chaos ensued when some fans passed 'rude' comments

Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill during team training session at Adelaide PHOTO: PTI

ADELAIDE, 4 DEC

Fans will no longer be allowed at India's practice sessions in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series against Australia after fans passed "rude" comments during the team's training here ahead of the second Test starting on Friday. The practice session was thrown open to fans on Tuesday.

While a handful of them gathered to watch Australia, thousands converged to catch the Indian team live in action from close quarters as the practice facility stands in Adelaide are very close to the nets. "It was complete chaos. During the Australian training session, not more than 70-odd people turned up but during India's session, 3000 came. No one expected so many fans to turn up," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"There was another fans' day in Sydney (ahead of the fifth Test) which stands canceled as players were very disturbed by the rude and insensitive comments that were passed (here)," he added.

An eye-witness said that fans badgered the likes of Rohit Sharma and Rishabh Pant to hit sixes and passed comments on the fitness of another player. "Virat (Kohli) and Shubman Gill could have been mobbed because of so many people.

Some were doing Facebook live with friends and talking loudly just as the batter took a stance," he said. "One supporter continuously urged a player to say 'hi' to him in Gujarati. —*PTI*

Changing positions no longer a mental challenge: Rahul

ADELAIDE, 4 DEC

Senior India batter K L Rahul on Wednesday said that he has overcome the "mental challenge" of being a floater in the line-up, which has made him confident about doing well for the side at any position. Rahul was superb in the first Test against Australia in Perth with scores of 26 and 77 while opening the innings in the absence of regular skipper Rohit Sharma, who was on a paternity break. With Rohit walking back into the playing eleven for the day-night Test starting Friday, Rahul was asked the obvious question about his batting position. "Anything (opening or middle order)," the 32-year-old batter told reporters ahead of India's training session here. "I just want to be in the playing XI, which means wherever. You go there and bat and play for the team," said the batter with 3000 plus runs in 54 Tests. Rahul started his Test career in Australia exactly a decade back as a middle-order batter, who later opened. His batting slot in both the Test and ODI set-up was far from steady all these years and this affected him mentally. "I have batted in many positions. Earlier it was a bit of a challenge, not technically but mentally about how to play those first 20-25 balls," he opened up about his apprehensions. "How early can I attack? How much do I need to be cautious? Those were things that were tricky early on. "But now that I have played in Tests and ODIs all over the place. —PTI

THREE-MATCH ODI SERIES

Big test for India's batters against mighty Australia

BRISBANE, 4 DEC

India will aim to address their batting inconsistency and finalise their combination ahead of the Women's World Cup next year when they take on mighty Australia in the three-match ODI series, starting here Thursday.

The Indian team has arrived in Australia after securing a 2-1 home ODI series win over New Zealand.

However, it was fairly evident that India's batting was not in top shape. As a result, they have dropped out-of-form opener Shefali Verma from the squad to try a different combination. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side would know that it has a huge task cut out against Australia who have historically dominated them in 50-overs cricket. Their record Down Under is dismal, with just four wins out of sixteen WODIs. In the last series in 2021, Australia defeated India 2-1. The series will give skipper Kaur and coach Amol Majumdar a perfect opportunity to bolster their preparations for the ODI World Cup at home next year.

Australia will be without regular skipper Alyssa Healy, who is nursing a knee injury. Additionally, the hosts have not played in this format since March and will be aiming to shake off the rust.

"(India) have got superstars ... always hard-fought and crucial key moments in every game, and while we're at home we're expecting a lot of India support," Australia captain Tahlia McGrath said. For India, Smriti Mandhana will bear the responsibility of providing a solid start with the bat. Besides two single-digit scores, the flamboyant opener has been in fine form this year, scoring 448 runs at an impressive average of around 75 in her last six ODIs. Kaur's form will be a significant concern for India, as she has struggled with consistency this year. With much at stake, her captaincy and batting have come under scrutiny following India's early exit from the T20 World Cup. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

I-LEAGUE

Kashmir continues to shine at home with 2-1 win over Delhi

SRINAGAR, 4 DEC

Real Kashmir FC continued to shine at home by picking up their second win in three matches, beating Delhi FC 2-1 in their I-League match here on Wednesday.

Bouba Aminou (72nd minute) and Lalramdinsanga Ralte (84th) scored for the 'Snow Leopards' while Stephane Samir Binong (89th) pulled one back for the Delhi side at the TRC Football Turf ground.

Ishfaq Ahmed-coached Real Kashmir, who have so far played all their matches at home, have seven points from three matches, while Delhi FC suffered their second consecutive defeat to remain with just one point that they earned from the drawn match against Namdhari FC.

Off-the-ball incidents generated more excitement in the first half than the actual game.

Real Kashmir Celebrates after winning over Delhi PHOTO: PTI

Delhi FC goalkeeper Debnath Mondal was the center of attention, though for the wrong reasons.

On one occasion, the lanky goalkeeper left his charge and reached the opposite area to argue with the referee on a free-kick decision only to return to his position with a yellow card.

The next time, Mondal dangerously left his area in an attempt to foil a rival striker. He got beaten, and only a goal-line clearance by a defender saved the moment for the visiting side. —*PTI*

Gukesh and Liren play out yet another draw

SINGAPORE, 4 DEC

Indian challenger D Gukesh and defending champion Ding Liren of China played out their fifth draw on the trot in a nervy eighth game of the World Chess Championship to remain level on points here on Wednesday.

The drawn match left both the players on an identical tally of 4 points each, still shy of 3.5 points in order to win the championship.

The two players signed peace after 51 moves. It was the sixth draw of the 14-round match.

The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game while the 18-year-old Gukesh had emerged victorious in the third game.

The second, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh games had ended in draws.Liren decided against risking much and took home a draw while it was possible in a complicated position.

The game lasted more than four hours.It seemed like Gukesh would also take it given the chances Liren has misplayed in the match.Just six more games are left to be played in the USD 2.5 million championship and if a tied result happens after 14 rounds, there will be games under faster time control to determine the winner. —*PTI*

D GUKESH PHOTO: PTI

Vaibhav PHOTO: PTI

Suryavanshi shines as India stroll into semifinals

SHARJAH, 4 DEC

Thirteen-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi lived up to the hype around his rare talent as India outclassed the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by 10 wickets to enter the semifinals of the U-19 Asia Cup here on Wednesday.

Electing to bat, UAE lost wickets at regular intervals to be bundled out for 137 in 44 overs.

Right-arm medium pacer Yudhajit Guha was the pick of the bowlers for India with figures of 3/15, while Chetan Sharma (2/27) and all-rounder Hardik Raj (2/28) scalped two wickets apiece.

India cantered home in 16.1 overs riding on unbeaten half-centuries from the opening duo of Suryavanshi (76 off 46) and Ayush Mhatre (67 off 51).

Suryavanshi recently turned heads at the IPL auction where he was sold to Rajasthan Royals for Rs 1.10 crore, becoming the youngest player to go under the hammer in the league's history. While left-hander Suryavanshi decorated his innings with three hits to the fence and four strikes over it, Mhatre struck four boundaries and as many sixes during his knock. The majority of the 13-year-old's sixes came in the cow corner region.

Brief Scores:
UAE Under-19: 137 all out in 44 overs (Muhammad Rayan 35; Yudhajit Guha 3/15, Chetan Sharma 2/27, Hardik Raj 2/28) lost to India Under-19: 143 for no loss in 16.1 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 76 not out, Ayush Mhatre 67 not out) by 10 wickets. —*PTI*

Bradman baggy green cap sells for $3,11,000

PARIS, 4 DEC

A sun-faded and insect-damaged Test cap worn by Don Bradman has sold for A$479,700 ($311,000) a record for a cap worn by the Australian cricket icon.

Bradman wore the "baggy green" cap during India's first tour of Australia as an independent country in 1947-48, scoring 715 runs in six innings at an average of 178.75. During the five-Test series, Bradman also became Australia's first player to notch 100 first-class centuries as he led the hosts to a 4-0 win.

At the end of the tour, Bradman gave the cap to the Indian team manager Pankaj "Peter" Gupta who passed it on to wicketkeeper PK Sen. It was bought by the previous owner in 2003 and has been on loan to the Bradman Museum in the cricketer's hometown of Bowral since 2010. Put up for auction with an estimated value of A$300,000 -A$400,000, it sold to an Australian bidder, Sydney auction house Bonhams said. Bradman's first test cap worn in 1928 sold for A$450,000 in 2020, nearly a year after Australia's spin bowling great Shane Warne sold his baggy green for more than A$1 million to aid bushfire relief efforts. —*AP*

PHOTO: X

NBA Cup: Knicks early favorites to win

LONDON, 4 DEC

The Knicks beat the Orlando Magic 121-106 to advance to in the quarterfinals of the NBA Emirates Cup. Karl-Anthony Towns led the way with 23 points and 15 rebounds, while Josh Hart had a triple-double with 11 points, 13 rebounds, and 10 assists. Of the eight teams remaining, the Knicks have the best odds to win the whole thing

The NBA Cup quarterfinal matches were announced on Tuesday after group play came to an end. Eight teams will be in action next week with six qualifying for the first time. Milwaukee and New York make it back-to-back quarters appearances, while it will be the first time for remaining contenders, Oklahoma City, Golden State, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta, and Orlando.

Orlando goes to Milwaukee and Atlanta will visit New York on the Eastern Conference side of the bracket. Oklahoma City will host Dallas and Houston will host Golden State in the Western Conference quarters. Milwaukee (4-0) clinched its berth by beating Detroit to win East Group B on Tuesday, while New York (4-0) beat Orlando (3-1) to win East Group A. The Magic wound up as the East's wild card by winning a point-differential tie-breaker over Boston.

Atlanta (3-1) had previously wrapped up East Group C, largely because of a one-point win over the Celtics earlier. Oklahoma City's win over Utah wound up giving the Thunder the West Group B title, and the Thunder joined Houston (West Group A) —*PTI*

Knicks beat Magic to advance to the NBA Cup PHOTO: X/ @NYKNICKS

25TH GRAND SLAM

Djokovic to begin bid for crown in Brisbane

NEW DELHI, 4 DEC

Novak Djokovic will begin his 2025 season and bid for an 11th Australian Open title at the Brisbane International, it was announced Wednesday, with the Serbian superstar now coached by Andy Murray.

The 37-year-old is targeting a record 25th Grand Slam crown after failing to add to the total during a frustrating 2024, although he did win Olympic singles gold in Paris. The ATP-WTA event runs December 29-January 5, with the Australian Open to begin on 12 January.

"I'm excited to be kicking off my Australian swing at the Brisbane International and to compete again at Pat Rafter Arena," said Djokovic.

"I am looking forward to experiencing the incredible support from the Australian fans and making this tournament one to remember."

Should he win, it would be his 100th career title, just the third man in the Open era behind Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103) to achieve the feat. Djokovic was beaten in the Australian Open semi-finals this year by eventual champion Jannik Sinner with his failure to lift another major leaving him tied with Margaret Court on a record 24 Grand Slam singles crowns.

In a bid to surpass her in Melbourne, he has teamed up with long-time rival and the now-retired Murray.

The Brisbane tournament will also mark the return to competitive tennis of Australian Nick Kyrgios, who has played just one ATP Tour singles match in two years after knee, foot, and wrist injuries.

Other men's players starting their year in Brisbane include Grigor Dimitrov, Holger Rune, Frances Tiafoe, and Matteo Berrettini. Reigning Australian Open women's champion and world number one Aryna Sabalenka had previously announced she too would start her season at the Queensland Tennis Centre. —*AP*

Messi is among bottom seeds for Club WC draw

MIAMI, 4 DEC

Manchester City and Real Madrid will be placed in the highest-ranking pot in the draw for the Club World Cup, while Lionel Messi's Inter Miami is in the lowest.

FIFA confirmed on Tuesday the procedure for the draw, which takes place in Miami on Thursday.

The newly expanded tournament will be held in the United States from 15 June to 13 July next year.

Also in Pot 1 are European giants Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain as well as the four highest-ranked teams from South America: Flamengo, Palmeiras, River Plate, and Fluminense. Inter Miami, which qualified despite being eliminated in the first round of the MLS Cup playoffs, is in Pot 4, along with the Seattle Sounders. IFA said the 32 qualified teams had been allocated positions in four pots for the draw to "ensure competitive balance and geographical diversity." —*PTI*